



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 July 2020

by Nick Palmer BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/20/3249891

Land east of Woodlands, Barrells Road, Thurston, Suffolk IP31 3SF

- 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 & Mrs G Le Mar against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/05465, dated 11 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 22 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of 2 detached dwellings with garages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The application is for outline planning permission with all matters reserved.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - i) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - ii) its accessibility to services and facilities.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. Barrells Road is a narrow road which leads into the countryside from the eastern end of Thurston. The site is some distance along that road and well outside the settlement boundary for the village as defined in the development plan. It lies immediately to the east of two dwellings and forms part of a field which has been fenced off from the remainder.
5. To the west of the two properties referred to above, planning permissions have been granted for 8 dwellings. At the time of my visit two of those dwellings were under construction. These permitted dwellings would extend the line of built development from the built-up area of the village up to the two properties next to the site.
6. On the opposite side of the road there is open countryside including farmland and woodland. The road has a verdant rural character in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site. The permitted development along one side of the

road will have a suburbanising effect, but the character of the road will remain rural because of the open countryside on the opposite side of the road.

7. The proposed development would extend the ribbon of development further into the open countryside beyond the limit marked by the two existing dwellings. This encroachment of urban development into the countryside would be at odds with the rural character of the road. Moreover, the development combined with the permitted development would have the appearance of unrestricted sprawl along the road.
8. As well as being visible from Barrells Road, the development would be particularly prominent and intrusive to users of the public footpath which runs between the site and the adjacent dwelling.
9. Development plan policies require maintenance and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area. Policy GP1 of the Local Plan¹ (LP) has this requirement, while Policy H15 of the LP requires new housing to be consistent with the character of its setting. Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy² (CS) requires maintenance and enhancement of the environment and retention of local distinctiveness. The conservation and enhancement of local character is a requirement of Policy FC1.1 of the Core Strategy Focussed Review³ (CSFR). For the reasons given above, the proposal would erode the rural character and would not accord with those policies.
10. Policies CS1 and CS2 of the CS, and H7 of the LP restrict the development that can take place in the countryside. Those policies are not consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which allows for rural housing in a wider range of circumstances. While the proposal would not accord with those policies, I give limited weight to that conflict because of their inconsistency with the Framework.
11. The spatial strategy of the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan (2019) (NDP) is set out in Policy 1 of the plan. This requires new development to be focused within the settlement boundary and supports such development. This is a different emphasis from the restrictive approach taken by Policies CS1, CS2 and H7, and remains up-to-date. The development would not accord with Policy 1 of the NDP.
12. Because the development would be adjacent to existing and permitted development, it would not be isolated, in my view. While it would not offend paragraph 78 of the Framework in terms of avoiding isolated homes in the countryside, it would not accord with paragraph 170 which requires recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. I conclude on this issue that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area.

Accessibility

13. Thurston is designated a Key Service Centre in Policy CS1 of the CS. It has a railway station, good bus services and a range of services and facilities. The site is outside the settlement but within walking distance of its services and facilities. The absence of footpaths and street lighting along Barrells Road and

¹ Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998

² Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008)

³ Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012)

adjoining roads would deter walking to some extent. However, cycling to local services and facilities would be an option and any car journeys into the village would be short. For these reasons the proposed development would have reasonably good accessibility to services and facilities.

Planning Balance

14. The Council can demonstrate greater than 5 years' supply of deliverable housing sites and its policies are not out of date on this basis. However, I have noted that policies CS1 and CS2 of the CS and Policy H7 of the LP are inconsistent with the Framework. Those policies are most important for determining the application and are out-of-date. Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework provides for permission to be granted, unless adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
15. The provision of two units of housing would be of benefit in terms of boosting the supply of housing, but in the absence of a shortfall in housing supply, that benefit would be limited. The reasonably good accessibility to services and facilities weighs in favour, but only to a limited extent. Employment would be generated during construction and there would be additional expenditure in the local economy from the occupiers of the dwellings. The scale of the economic benefit would be limited. There is no evidence before me to demonstrate that the proposal would be of particular benefit in terms of maintaining the vitality of a rural community.
16. I give overall very significant weight to the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area and conflict with planning policies. This significantly and demonstrably outweighs the overall limited weight that I give to the benefits of the proposal.
17. The balance indicates that the proposal would not accord with policies FC1 or FC1.1 of the CSFR which require sustainable development.
18. The Council's decision refers to Policy H10 of the LP. This concerns dwellings for key agricultural workers and is not relevant to this appeal.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Palmer

INSPECTOR