The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2020

by Peter Mark Sturgess BSc (Hons), MBA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Thursday, 17 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/20/3250909
Land East of 34 Station Road, Holme Hale, Norfolk

- 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 David Yaxley against the decision of Breckland District Council.
- The application Ref 3PL/2020/0064/O, dated 21 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 March 2020.
- The development proposed is the construction of 3 houses (one detached, two semi-detached). Each house will have access from Station Road and its own drive and turning circle. The houses will be developed in line with the existing properties on their western boundary. To the east of the development a 10m buffer will be planted to mark the end of the village. The semi-detached properties will each have three bedrooms, the detached property four bedrooms. Each house will have a substantial back garden which extends to the southern boundary of the site, and the former railway line.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I note that the name of the appellant and agent given on the application form submitted to the Council is Lois Partridge. However, it has been confirmed that the appellant is David Yaxley, with Lois Partridge being the agent.

3. The planning application was submitted in outline form with all matters except for access reserved for future approval(s). From the description of development, it is clear that the scale of development being sought is 3 dwellings. I have determined the appeal on this basis, treating the submitted plans as illustrative only, insofar as they relate to matters other than access.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the appeal proposal would be acceptable having regard to the character and appearance of the area and the location of the development.

Reasons

5. The site lies at the end of frontage housing development around the site of the former Holme Hale railway station and the disused track bed. The main part of the village lies across open fields to the north east.

6. The existing frontage housing development ends at No 34 Station Road with open fields elevated above Station Road continuing into the open countryside. The proposed development would be located on part of these open fields. At present there is no defined boundary between the appeal site and further open agricultural land between Station Road and the disused railway.

7. The boundary between the existing property (No 34) and the open agricultural land is clearly defined by a hedgerow, and as such there is a clear distinction between the domestic character of No 34 and its garden and the agricultural land beyond. The appeal site itself is open agricultural land with views across it from Station Road. The area of the appeal site and the land around it is undeveloped and is both visually and functionally part of the open countryside. The appeal proposal would introduce built development on to this open agricultural land. Whilst it would be adjacent to the development to the west of No 34 it would unmistakably read as an extension of built development into the countryside. This intrusion into the countryside would harm the rural character and appearance of this part of Holme Hale.

8. Policies GEN 05 and HOU 05 of the Breckland Local Plan 2019 (LP) seek to allow development within the countryside, subject to compliance with defined criteria. In particular proposals should constitute sensitive 'infilling' or 'rounding off' or be some other form of development that is defined as being appropriate to a countryside location. The other criteria referred to in the policies relate to specific development that requires a countryside location. The proposal does not meet the requirements of these further criteria.

9. I have had regard to the definitions of 'rounding off' and 'infilling' referred to by the appellant and the Council and set out in Policy HOU 05 of the LP. The site's relationship to the existing built form is limited to one boundary, with the land on other boundaries being more closely related to the agricultural land surrounding this part of the village. Given the sites limited relationship to the built development on Station Road, and it would not be seen to complete an incomplete group of buildings, its development cannot reasonably be described as 'rounding off'. It cannot fulfil the definition of 'infilling' as it does not have existing development on either side of the proposed site.

10. I note the appellant's intention to establish a planting belt between the proposed development and the adjacent agricultural land. However, this would not turn the site into an infill plot or 'round off' development as there would still be no built development beyond the proposed planting belt. It would also not necessarily prevent future development next to the appeal site extending further into the open countryside.

11. The appeal proposal would provide three new houses which would have the potential to contribute to the vitality and viability of services in the local area. However, I note that the LP is recently adopted, and the Council is able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Whilst I have had regard to these matters, they do not outweigh the harm that I have found.

12. Accordingly, the appeal proposal conflicts with Policies GEN 05 and HOU 05 of the LP, these policies seek, amongst other things that development in countryside locations should meet specific criteria including 'infilling' or 'rounding off'. The appeal also fails to comply with Policies GEN 02, COM 01 and ENV 05 which seek, amongst other things, that proposals respect their surroundings, be sensitive to the character of the surrounding area and

recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. These policies reflect the requirements of paragraphs 127 and 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Conclusion

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

Peter Mark Sturgess

INSPECTOR