
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2020

by Jonathan Price BA(Hons) DMS DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2620/W/20/3255548

Land off Church Road, Aylmerton, Norfolk NR11 8PU

- 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 Colin Richardson against the decision of North Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref PO/19/1410, dated 16 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 no. dwelling with associated access.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application was made in outline with all detailed matters reserved for later consideration, apart from access. I have dealt with the appeal on the same basis, considering the drawings provided of the front elevation and siting of the dwelling as indicative of what is proposed.

Main Issue

3. Whether the proposal would be suitable in this location in the context of local and national planning policy for the provision of new housing.

Reasons

4. The dwelling proposed would replace a former farm building and occupy part of land otherwise used for equestrian purposes and associated with an existing house at Running Tree Farm. The site is close to the nearby small village of Aylmerton, although the proposed dwelling would be set apart from the residential development running continuously each side of Church Road and The Street.
5. Policy SS1 of the Council's Core Strategy¹ (CS) focuses the majority of new development into the towns and larger settlements, with a lesser amount into those smaller villages with services. Aylmerton benefits from bus services to the larger towns in this area, which can be caught from quite near to this site. However, these are not shown to run at a particularly high frequency. Other than this bus service there is little else by way of facilities located within this particular settlement that meet its residents' day to day requirements.

¹ North Norfolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy incorporating Development Control Policies – September 2008

6. For this reason, Aylmerton had not been defined a service village in the CS, and so the entire settlement is designated as countryside for policy purposes. On this basis, CS Policy SS2 limits new development in this location to that requiring a rural location or for specific reasons, including the provision of affordable housing, none of which apply to this proposal.
7. The dwelling would therefore conflict with CS policies SS1 and SS2. This is insofar as these concentrate development in towns, to link facilities with population and reduce the overall need to travel, and restrain this in the countryside to protect its undeveloped character and reduce the need for car journeys. There would be harm both from undermining this spatial strategy and by locating a further dwelling where, notwithstanding the modest bus service, further occupiers would be highly reliant on private car travel to meet daily household needs.
8. In respect of rural housing, there is no fundamental conflict between CS policies SS1 and SS2 and paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). This states that policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services and that where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. The growth focussed in the service villages identified in CS Policy SS1 helps support the facilities these contain, which are then available to all surrounding settlements.
9. Although the proposal would not be an isolated home in the countryside, which Framework paragraph 79 seeks to avoid, this does not prevent restrictive development plan policies over new housing in places where services are lacking. With regard to adhering to the advice of the national Planning Practice Guidance over rural housing², the CS has the robust evidential basis for a restriction on new market housing in smaller settlements with few services.
10. This scheme is not sufficiently similar to those in either Tharston, South Norfolk³ or Newman's Green, Babergh⁴, so as to gain any material support from the recent appeals allowed there. Those two cases were both within small enclaves of housing, providing obvious rounding off and infill respectively. In contrast, this proposal, whilst well-screened by vegetation and set within equestrian buildings, falls outside the residential fabric of this small settlement and extends housing further into the countryside.
11. In the two quite recent appeals in Breckland District, where dwellings were allowed against policy in Besthorpe⁵ and Daffy Green⁶, there was at that time an acknowledged lack of a five-year housing land supply on the part of the Council. This would have meant the development plan having been inarguably out-of-date for this reason, requiring both the Inspectors to give weight to the so-called 'tilted balance' under what is now paragraph 11 of the Framework. In North Norfolk, the Council can currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply and the appellant has not provided a detailed challenge to this evidence. Consequently, in this appeal, I have no grounds to find the CS as out-of-date for this reason.

² Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 67-009-20190722 Revision date: 22 07 2019

³ APP/L2630/W/18/3197272

⁴ APP/D3505/W/18/3197882

⁵ APP/F2605/W/18/3198911

⁶ APP/F2605/W/16/3148954

Balance and Conclusion

12. Policies SS1 and SS2 are those most important for determining this appeal. Despite the age of the CS, both remain up to date through a general consistency with the Framework. This is through setting an overall strategy for the distribution of sufficient housing and focusing significant amounts in locations which are sustainable, thereby limiting the need to travel, offering a choice of transport modes, helping to reduce congestion and emissions, and improving air quality and public health. Although the Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas, it does not actively promote new housing in the countryside where such a location is not required and accessibility to services more limited.
13. A five-year supply of housing land is not an upper limit on provision. The dwelling proposed would be a readily deliverable scheme, providing small social benefits in meeting a general need to boost housing supply and offering tangible economic benefits through its construction, future servicing and additional household spend. I can give little weight to the contribution that one dwelling would make towards addressing the eventual impacts on the housebuilding industry of the current Covid-19 pandemic, as these at present remain unknown.
14. However, the benefits found would not outweigh the significant harm found through a conflict with development plan policy over the location of new housing. On the basis of the foregoing, I consider that the proposal would be unsuitable in the context of local and national planning policy for the provision of new housing. For this reason, having taken into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jonathan Price

Inspector