The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPl MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/20/3251595
8 Cambridge Road, Foxton CB22 6SH

- 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 Mrs Nicola Terry against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- The application Ref S/4285/FL, dated 4 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 February 2020.
- The development proposed is the erection of a new dwelling to the rear of 8 Cambridge Road, Foxton.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

   - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
   - Whether or not the appeal site is an appropriate location for residential development, having regard to the development plan and national planning policy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Existing houses along this part of Cambridge Road are a mix of single and two storey, and of varied style, character and appearance. The existing dwellings at Nos. 8 (in front of the appeal site) and 6 (to the rear of the appeal site) are both two storey in scale. Although the houses on either side of the appeal site are bungalows, the proposed dwelling would not be out of scale with its immediate neighbours front and rear, and would be sufficiently well spaced with regard to Nos. 4 and 10 so as not to appear out of scale with the latter two.

4. In principle, the varied architectural style of Cambridge Road provides a basis for consideration of a more contemporary design approach at the appeal site, particularly given the site's location and the extent of vegetation screening the site from both the roadside and from the railway station. However, the dwelling's proposed fenestration pattern on its south elevation would give the dwelling a somewhat cross-eyed appearance, whilst I agree with the Council that the roof, and the interface of the roof with the dwelling's elevations, would

be awkward and incongruous, being neither unambiguously flat-roofed nor solely a more conventional pitched roofed design. This would be particularly evident on, but not limited to, the building's end elevations where the roof would be more akin to a lantern roof in form.

5. Existing boundary trees and shrubs presently provide a heavy, verdant screen to the existing site. Whilst some of these would be removed or managed within the proposed development, thereby opening up views through the site, the proposed dwelling would be unlikely to ever be visually dominant within the streetscene. Nevertheless, it would have a degree of visibility, particularly at certain times of the year, and therefore a presence in the streetscene in the same way that No. 6 can be glimpsed through the skeletal framework of bare tree canopies and above the roof of No. 4. In such views, the awkward interface of façade and roofline would be the over-riding image of the proposed dwelling. As such it would fail to respond positively to the modest and generally well-balanced and proportioned character and appearance of nearby dwellings.

6. I accept that the proposal's two storey form and broadly rectangular footprint would reflect the form and scale of Nos 6 and 8, whilst the varied architectural style of the surrounding area would not discount an alternative, contemporary approach to design and appearance. It is also evident that efforts have gone into the building's design to mitigate proximity to and relationship with the railway line, and the incorporation of solar panels into the south-facing roof elevation is also welcomed. I note too, the appellant's indication that revisions to the proposal's design could be considered. However, I have to determine the application on the basis upon which the Council considered it and therefore, for the reasons I have set out, the proposal fails to provide a coherent proposal with a clear vision of positive contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would fail to achieve the high quality design sought by SCLP policy HQ/1 and would cause harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area through its somewhat awkward design and appearance contrary to SCLP policy H/16.

Location

7. The appeal site lies within a wider group of houses and buildings on a triangular-shaped wedge of land to the north of Foxton railway station formed principally by the railway line and the A10. The site is located beyond the defined development framework limits for the 'group village' of Foxton where South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCLP) policy S/7 states that only allocations within Neighbourhood Plans and development for a range of specified uses which need to be located in the countryside or are otherwise supported by other policies in the SCLP.

8. The supporting text[1] to SCLP policy S/7 states that development frameworks are necessary to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment at village edge locations and to protect against incremental growth in unsustainable locations. It goes on to state that development framework limits take into account the present built-up areas of settlements but have not been drawn around small clusters of houses or areas of scattered development isolated in open countryside or detached from the main concentration of buildings in villages.

[1] Paragraph 2.50

9. I have no evidence before me to suggest that the proposal is an allocation in a Neighbourhood Plan, nor has it been argued that the proposal falls within the range of uses set out at SCLP policy S/7(2). The proposal is therefore contrary to SCLP policy S/7 and, with no evidence proffered to challenge the Council's statement regarding a 5-year housing land supply, I have no reason to believe that the most important policies for determining the application are out of date.

10. However, although located beyond Foxton's defined development framework limits, the site is not isolated in open countryside, nor is it detached from the main concentration of buildings within the village. It is formed of the rear portion of the residential garden of No. 8, with residential gardens of neighbouring houses to both sides and to the rear. Indeed, the group of houses within which the appeal site is located is closely related in visual and physical terms with houses on Station Road and the rest of the settlement. Other than the railway line and station platforms and a small area of vacant land immediately adjacent to the level crossing, the area within which the appeal site lies is largely contiguous with housing along Station Road and the rest of the village.

11. The Council recognise that some sites beyond development framework limits may be seen amongst the local community as being part of the village. However, it seems to me that notwithstanding the appeal site's location relative to the development framework limit, houses along the Cambridge Road street frontage are very much a part of Foxton in visual, physical and contextual terms.

12. The appellant describes a summary of the facilities and services present within Foxton, which include a pub, shop and post office, primary school and, conspicuously in relation to the appeal site's proximity to the railway station, good access to public transport facilities. The Council have not challenged this summary, and refer instead to Foxton in this context in only generalised terms in the officer report but, it seems to me, the appellant's description is both compelling and makes Foxton reasonably well served for services, facilities and transport links.

13. The group of houses within which the appeal site lies, and thus also the appeal site, have as convenient access to the village's services, facilities and transport links as do houses on Station Road close to the railway station. Neither the site nor existing buildings are isolated in open countryside or detached from the main concentration of buildings within Foxton given the contiguous nature of development along Station Road and Cambridge Road and the character of the area around the intersection of these roads, the railway and the railway station.

14. The appellant has quoted supporting paragraph 2.50 to SCLP policy S/7 to supplement the Council's reference to paragraph 2.51 and to put it into context. Thus, although sited beyond the development framework limit of Foxton, I am satisfied that the development of the appeal site would not amount to gradual encroachment into the countryside on the edge of the village which SCLP policy S/7 and development framework limits seek to protect the countryside around defined settlements from.

15. I accept that an additional dwelling in this location beyond the development framework limit would amount to incremental growth. However, supporting paragraph 2.50 also states that the purpose of development framework limits

is to help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations. Notwithstanding the site's location beyond the development framework limit, it remains sufficiently well-related to the existing built extent of Foxton, its development framework limit and the village's services and facilities such that development of the appeal site for a single dwelling would not amount to a promotion of unsustainable patterns of development, would not encroach into open countryside and would not amount to incremental growth in an unsustainable location.

16. Thus, whilst the proposal would nevertheless be, for reasons I have set out above, contrary to SCLP policies S/6, S/7 and S/10, it would not be wholly inconsistent with the Council's broad spatial strategy set out in SCLP policy S/2(c), (e) or (f). However, as I have concluded above that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, that harm and the conflict with SCLP policies S/6, S/7 and S/10 in the manner described above, would outweigh any support offered by SCLP supporting paragraph 2.50 regarding the site's location and the aims of the SCLP's development framework limits.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie

INSPECTOR