



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2021

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2003/W/20/3252432

land adjacent 17 Common Road, Wressle

Easting(x): 496952 Northing(y): 409400

- 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 Chris Morley against the decision of North Lincolnshire Council.
 - The application Ref PA/2019/2035, dated 3 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is outline planning permission for the development of 4 single storey dwellings on Land adjacent to 17 Common Road, Wressle. All matters are reserved for future approval.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application for planning permission was submitted in outline with all matters reserved for further consideration. A number of plans and drawings were submitted with the application, including an existing topographical plan, existing site location plan and two proposed site layout plans¹.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:

- The effects 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

4. The appeal site is part of a larger open paddock set in gently rolling countryside beyond the end of a linear stretch of frontage development which extends south-westwards from the crossroads junction of Brigg Road, Bridge Road and Common Road along the southern side of Common Road. A similar stretch of linear frontage development extends south-eastwards along the northern side of Brigg Road from the same crossroads.

¹ Drwg Nos: 3325 0001; EX001 Rev 01; PP01 Rev 00 and PP02

5. The proposal, albeit submitted in outline form with all matters reserved, demonstrates that the site could be developed for four dwellings in a manner true to the prevailing linear form of Wressle evident along both the southern side of Common Road and the eastern side of Brigg Road. The same is also true of the scale of the proposed development, where the single storey scale of the proposed dwellings would reflect the prevailing scale and character of existing properties along this spur from the crossroads.
6. However, the existing residential property at 17 Common Road provides a clear and distinct end point for the settlement. Beyond that property's boundary, which runs close to the bungalow without any pronounced sideways spread that could blur the transition from settlement to countryside, the appeal site is very much closely aligned with the gently rolling fields and paddocks on either side of Common Road and then Wressle Road.
7. Although Broughton is a clear visual marker visible on the rising land beyond the dip in Common Road / Wressle Road, the character of the appeal site and the open countryside of which it is part, is distinct from both settlements. The areas of woodland beyond the fields on either side of the road provide substantial visual features, whilst the gentle dip and rising land beyond, add to the area's prevailing pleasant rural character.
8. Most significantly, however, this gently rolling countryside provides a useful breathing space between Wressle and the larger settlement of Broughton, as well as between Wressle and the complex of buildings at Options Watermill. The development of the appeal site would incrementally extend built development into the open countryside. Unlike Brigg Road, where the built-form becomes more sporadic beyond the southeastern end of the row of houses, there is a more clearly defined, abrupt transition from settlement to countryside. The proposal would erode this clear and distinct visual breathing space between Wressle and Options Watermill, and Wressle and Broughton and, in so doing, the clear distinction of them being separate and distinct settlements would be eroded in what is a limited gap between them.
9. The development of four single storey dwellings in the manner indicated on the illustrative proposed site plan would follow the prevailing linear form and pattern of development along Common Road. It would also do so in a manner, scale and form reflective of those same properties. However, the incremental drift of residential development along Common Road, whilst reflective of Wressle's prevailing form and character, would nevertheless erode the pleasant rural gap that allows Wressle and Broughton to be understood as distinct settlements set within a gently rolling rural landscape.
10. Contrary to the appellant's suggestion that the appeal site only represents a very small part of the wider open landscape, it nevertheless has a not insignificant length of street frontage. Although access is a reserved matter, the suggested creation of individual accesses would perpetuate the harmful sense of outward spread into the gap beyond Wressle and Broughton and, because of the nature and circumstances of the gap between Wressle and Broughton, the effect on character and appearance of the incremental erosion of this gap and the outward spread of ribbon development along Common Road cannot be underestimated. This would, I conclude, cause material harm to the character and appearance of the site and the pleasant rural nature and setting of it and its surroundings.

11. Whilst policies CS2, CS3 and CS8 of the North Lincolnshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (CS) and saved policy RD2 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan (LP) are largely concerned with where and how development should be delivered, they recognise the importance of high standards of design and the character and appearance of the surrounding areas, including open countryside and nearby settlements. For the reasons I have set out, the proposal would fail to adequately respond to these factors and would result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and the setting of both Wressle and Broughton. The proposal would not therefore be consistent with CS policies CS2, CS3 or CS8 or saved LP policy RD2 in this respect.

Location of development

12. The appeal site is part of a larger open paddock and adjoins an existing residential plot but is located in the open countryside beyond the defined settlement boundary for Wressle. Its position beyond the defined settlement boundary is not disputed by the main parties. However, it does not lie in an isolated location. Although Wressle is a settlement with few, if any, services and only limited access to public transport networks, the appeal site directly adjoins an existing residential property at the end of a short 'ribbon' of development on Common Road.
13. The appeal site is also only a relatively short walk from the larger settlement of Broughton, which is more generously provided for in terms of services, facilities and public transport links to the wider surrounding area. The Council have expressed concern that the pavement link between Wressle and Broughton is dilapidated but, at the time of my visit to the site, it appeared anything but.
14. Although of relatively limited width, the pavement did not strike me as being so narrow as to render it so unusable that it would actively discourage its use to access Broughton on foot. Nor did the nature or length of the walk from the appeal site to Broughton. Rather, the pavement provides a smooth and continuous pavement link benefitting from streetlights along its length between Wressle and Broughton. It may run along the opposite side of the road to the appeal site, but the site is located (just) within the 30mph speed limit and visibility is reasonable in both directions. Its use may necessitate crossing the road from the appeal site, but doing so does not strike me as being an insurmountable or hazardous obstacle, or otherwise acting as a significant deterrent to the use of the pavement.
15. The main parties are broadly agreed that policies CS2, CS3 and CS8 of the North Lincolnshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (CS) and saved policy RD2 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan (LP) are not entirely consistent with the Framework. The site lies beyond the settlement boundary for Wressle and thus in the open countryside. Nevertheless, whilst Wressle has few if any services or facilities, the site is not isolated and it is within an easy walk along a well-lit and recently re-surfaced pavement of nearby Broughton with its wider range of services, facilities and transport connections. Although not consistent with the development plan policies set out above in this respect, the appeal site's location is consistent with the Framework's approach to rural housing development.

Other Matters

16. Whilst I have noted the appellant's concerns regarding the manner in which the Council's planning committee considered the proposal, and specifically whether or not they considered any plans or drawings, it is clear that plans and drawings formed part of the application submission and I have considered them accordingly. This is not a material consideration to which I give any significant weight and is a matter between the appellant and the Council.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

17. There is no dispute that the Council's supply of deliverable housing sites falls substantially below a five-year supply. There is also broad agreement that CS policies CS2, CS3 and CS8, and saved LP policy RD2, are not entirely consistent with the Framework. However, those policies do recognise the importance of high-quality development that is not detrimental to the character or appearance of either open countryside or nearby settlements. Nevertheless, the presumption set out at Framework paragraph 11(d) is engaged, subject to the provisions of 11(d)(ii).
18. In the context of the Council's poor housing land supply, the provision of an additional four dwellings would be a welcome contribution to housing land supply and would bring with it both economic and social benefits, albeit that those benefits would only be moderate as commensurate with a development of four dwellings. The proposal would not be isolated and although Wressle is not generously imbued with services or facilities, it does have a convenient, lit pavement link to nearby Broughton.
19. The proposal would extend the existing ribbon development along Common Road further to the south. Although this would be consistent with the prevailing pattern of development along both Common Road and Brigg Road, it would come at the expense of the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area. There is a finite gap between Wressle and Broughton, which is comprised of a gently rolling open landscape, framed to the east and west by areas of woodland.
20. The proposed development, with a not insignificant road frontage, would erode the visual breathing space between the two settlements to which the appeal site contributes, whilst also bringing Wressle's built development closer to the complex of buildings at Options Watermill. Together, these factors lead me to conclude that, notwithstanding the tilted balance provided for by the Framework, the harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the setting of both Wressle and Broughton and would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.
21. Thus, for the reasons set out, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie

INSPECTOR