



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 January 2021

by Julie Dale Clark BA (Hons) DipTP MCD DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/W/20/3257384

Land to the rear of 16 Norwich Common, Wymondham NR18 0SP

- 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 Mr A Dale against the decision of South Norfolk Council.
 - The application Ref 2020/0620, dated 30 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 22 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is proposed development of 2 new dwellings, re-positioning of existing access drive and amenity space.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. I consider that the main issues are: -
 - whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for new housing having regard to the development plan and national policies; and
 - the effect of the bungalows on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location

3. The appeal site is described as being close to but outside the settlement boundary where Local Plan¹ Policy DM 1.3 indicates that permission for development in the countryside outside of the defined development boundaries of settlements will only be granted where specific Development Management Policies allow for development outside of development boundaries or it otherwise demonstrates overriding benefits in terms of economic, social and environmental dimensions. These dimensions or objectives are described in Local Plan Policy DM 1.1 and the National Planning Policy Framework².
4. The Council state that the proposal is not supported by any specific development management policies nor does it demonstrate overriding benefits. The appellant on the other hand contends that the appeal site is in a sustainable location being close to the settlement boundary and easily accessible to a broad range of facilities and services.

¹ South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document Adopted Version October 2015.

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019.

5. Although the appeal site is outside the settlement boundary, it is in a sustainable location being close to local services and facilities and public transport. Despite this, Policy DM 1.3 would be contravened if development were permitted on this site unless there are overriding benefits. This matter is addressed later in my reasoning.

Character and Appearance

6. The appeal site sits amongst a grouping of building and uses including domestic properties and a garage, car sales and vehicle storage/parking. The appeal site itself includes a dwelling and a substantial area of parked cars and a garage/workshop as well as garden / amenity space. The site, and the neighbouring grouping lies to the south of Norwich Common (B1172) a main road leading into Wymondham. Opposite is a substantial residential area on the northern side of the road. It also falls within an area described as a Strategic Gap, i.e. between Hethersett and Wymondham and Local Plan Policy DM 4.7 states that development will be permitted in Strategic Gaps where it would not erode or otherwise undermine its openness.
7. Furthermore, in considering this issue I have taken into account Local Plan policies DM 1.4 and DM 3.8 and Core Strategy³ Policy 2. The latter promotes good design and lists a set of criteria in order to create a sense of space and respect local distinctiveness. Amongst other things, Local Plan Policy DM 1.4 indicates that all development should take reasonable opportunities to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Policy DM 3.8 sets out design principles for all development in order to promote good design.
8. No reference has been made regarding the design of the proposed dwellings and I too see nothing objectionable in them. The concerns raised by the Council refer rather to the pattern of development in the area and the spatial qualities of the appeal site.
9. In its context, the appeal site is positioned amongst the group of building and land uses to the south of the road, Norwich Common, with open land surrounding it and development, urban in character, opposite on the northern side of the road. This grouping is quite clearly defined on plan form and when observed on site. Whilst it is not all developed and the appeal site comprises a substantial part of grassed garden land, the appeal site identifies with this grouping. However, much of the appeal site is open amenity space and therefore has a role to play in softening the transition from open countryside to the building, structures and land uses forming something of a linear pattern on this side of Norwich Common.
10. The Strategic Gap between Hethersett and Wymondham includes the appeal site and the grouping of buildings around it together with land to the south and east. There is substantial development on the northern side of the road but the gap excludes this. The Strategic Gap includes a fairly extensive area of land, although the plan I have seen does not include its full extent. Whilst the proposed dwellings would be set behind the general linear development on this side of the road and relate to them to some extent, the proposal would exacerbate any intrusion into it. The loss of the openness of most of the site is an added concern about the potentially negative impact on the Strategic Gap.

³ Greater Norwich Development Partnership Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk, Adopted March 2011, amendments adopted January 2014.

11. Although the dwellings would be of a modest single storey design, they would represent a permanent urbanising of an area that is currently primarily open. The associated access drives, boundary treatments, garages and other potential domestic paraphernalia would add to the resulting urban appearance. I therefore consider that the proposed development would conflict with the overall character and appearance of the wider area.

Other Matters

12. Local Plan policy DM 1.3 is referred to above and the appellant has expressed the view that there are overriding benefits to this scheme. The appellant casts doubt on the Council's ability to demonstrate its supply of land for new housing developments. However, the 2020 Housing Delivery Test Results⁴ indicate that South Norfolk Council achieved 133% delivery over the preceding three year period. The accompanying table indicates that there are no consequences for South Norfolk Council in this regard. I have invited comments from both parties regarding this document. The appellant has added nothing that contradicts this document and the Council has re-affirmed its assurance of its housing land supply and its performance to date. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that there is justification, at this time, for allowing these two dwellings contrary to the development plan policies referred to on this basis.
13. I have considered the proposal in terms of its sustainability and whilst it would be located reasonably close to local services and facilities, it would be outside the settlement and harm the character and appearance of the area as I have explained above. An overall assessment of the proposal's sustainability is therefore limited in terms of the policy advice set out in the Framework and in Local Plan Policy DM 1.1.
14. I have considered all other matters raised but none alter my conclusion.

Conclusion

15. I conclude that the proposal would not be an appropriate location for new housing and it would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with the Framework and the Council's development plan policies and therefore the appeal fails.

J D Clark

INSPECTOR

⁴ 2020 Housing Delivery Test (HDT) Results, published by the Government on 19 January 2021.