



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 25 May 2021 by Emma Worby BSc (Hons) MSc MRPTI

Decision by Martin Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/W/21/3267223

Abbots Hall, Smallwood Green, Bradfield St George IP30 0AL

- 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 & Mrs Wright against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/20/1003/FUL, dated 17 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of the existing dwelling with a new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The description of the proposed development has been taken from the appeal form, as the description of the proposal on the application form includes a detached garage which was omitted in revised drawings submitted during the application stage.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal site is currently occupied by a single storey detached dwelling along with a number of outbuildings including a container and a static caravan. The dwelling is brick built with a modest appearance. The site is located within an isolated and rural environment punctuated sparsely by individual and small groups of buildings and is surrounded by agricultural fields and adjacent to several agricultural buildings. The proposal would replace the existing dwelling with a new two-storey dwelling with a barn-like appearance.
6. Policy DM5 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document (2015) allows for the replacement of an existing dwelling on a one for one basis in the countryside. However, it goes on to say that it should be demonstrated that the proposed replacement dwelling respects the scale and floor area of the existing dwelling. The proposed dwelling would be significantly

larger than the one it replaces, with an indicated increase in footprint of 49.84m², an overall increase in floorspace of 133.89m², and an increase in height of 2.42m. Although the policy does not specifically define the term 'respect' or that any assessment should be premised solely on a quantitative analysis of the dimensions and measurements of the proposed development, I am satisfied that consideration on this basis should not be discounted. Such significant increases in scale and floor area over the modest size and scale of the existing dwelling is a clear indication in this instance of a failure to address the principal focus and objectives of the policy.

7. I accept that the proposed dwelling would have a more traditional agricultural appearance than the existing dwelling, incorporating appropriate materials which would be in keeping with the surrounding rural vernacular. However, when compared to the open and rural nature of the area, the excessive scale and bulk of the proposed dwelling would be an imposing addition to the landscape and appear overly prominent from the surrounding area. Although the replacement dwelling would not have an urbanising effect in terms of its design, which aims to mirror that of a barn or barn conversion, the additional built form on the site would conflict with the minimally developed, rural landscape and the existing modestly proportioned dwelling currently on the site.
8. It is noted that the replacement dwelling would be located close to several existing farm buildings, some of which are of a similar height to the proposal. Nevertheless, the proposed development would be located comfortably to the south of these buildings and even allowing for the physical relationship with these buildings, the resultant dwelling would appear as a dominating feature on the site when viewed particularly from this direction, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area.
9. In conclusion, it has been found that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and therefore would conflict with Policies DM1, DM2 and DM5 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document (2015). These collectively seek to maintain local character, ensuring that replacement dwelling in the countryside respects the scale of the existing dwelling.
10. The proposed development would also be contrary to the general design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework as it would not represent a high quality building which would add to the overall quality of the area or be sympathetic to local character including landscape setting, and there is no evidence that the proposal would be an outstanding or innovative design promoting high levels of sustainability.
11. Policy CS4 of the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (2010) is not relevant to this proposal, as the appeal site is not located within a defined settlement.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has highlighted where the existing dwelling could be extended under permitted development rights and has indicated that prior approval has already been granted for a rear extension. Should all of these works be carried out, including the rear extension, the appellant claims that this would result in a dwelling with a greater floorspace and height than the proposal. However, it is apparent that not all of the extensions put forward by the appellant have

been granted prior approval or planning permission by the Council and it has not been established as to whether these are able to be constructed under permitted development rights. Therefore, although it may be the case that these additions create a larger dwelling than the proposal in certain respects, as the fallback position has not been fully established, I attach only very limited weight to the possibility, which would not outweigh the harm identified.

13. It is also noted that the proposed replacement dwelling may provide higher levels of energy efficiency than the existing dwelling and therefore would have an environmental benefit. However, in the absence of any compelling evidence on this matter, the limited weight it would attract would not be sufficient to overcome the harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion and Recommendation

14. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Emma Worby

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

15. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Seaton

INSPECTOR