



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 12 October 2021

by Andrew Owen MA BA(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 October 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/A2470/W/21/3273066

Land adjoining The Rutland Point cafe and restaurant, Glaston Road, Morcott LE15 9DL

- 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 Bradley Freeman against the decision of Rutland County Council.
 - The application Ref 2020/1253/OUT, dated 26 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of 4no. light industrial units together with associated parking and service yard. Use Class E(c)(iii).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application was submitted in outline form with matters of access, appearance and layout for consideration at this stage, and matters of landscaping and scale reserved for later consideration. I have considered the appeal on the same basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the development is suitably located having regard to its accessibility by sustainable modes of transport.

Reasons

4. The site mainly comprises an area of vacant land that is within a cluster of development that includes a hotel, restaurant, car servicing garage, and a petrol filling station with accompanying convenience shop. These buildings are sited alongside the A47 which is an important route in the county's highway network. The site is outside any settlement and therefore is designated as countryside by policy CS4 of the Core Strategy (2011) (CS).
5. The nearest settlement is the village of Morcott. This is a small settlement with few facilities of its own. From my visit I saw a bus stop, a church and a village hall. It is about a 5-10 minute walk between the appeal site and the bus stop, and much of this route is long The Cockpit which connects the village to the A47. There is a pavement alongside this road, but it is narrow, mostly unlit and flanked by hedgerows and fields. The distance between the bus stop and the appeal site is not so great that it would prevent walking, and indeed I would anticipate that some Morcott residents may walk to the convenience store for day-to-day shopping. However, the route does not lend itself readily to

walking, particularly in the dark. In addition, the bus service has a low frequency of approximately a bus every two hours. Were any residents of Morcott employed at the site, they could walk to work. But due to the small size and population of the village, the likelihood of this would be very limited. Overall, it is unlikely that future employees of the proposal would use sustainable modes of transport to travel to and from work. The development would therefore be likely to generate an increase in car movements to and from the site.

6. I accept that in rural areas there will inevitably be some reliance on car travel. However the lack of any realistic alternative mode of transport for this site means the reliance on cars would be very high if not total.
7. As such the development would not be suitably located with regard to its accessibility by sustainable modes. It would therefore conflict with policy SP7 of the Site Allocations and Policies Document which supports small scale employment development provided that it would be in an accessible location and not generate an unacceptable increase in the amount of traffic movements. It would also conflict with this policy because there is no substantive evidence before me to suggest that there is no opportunity for the development to be located within the limits of development of nearby towns or villages.
8. Its location in the open countryside means it would also fail to accord with policy CS16 of the CS which identifies that new rural employment development should be located in the existing service centres. The policy does support the safeguarding of existing rural employment sites by allowing for the expansion of existing businesses, but the proposal is not for the expansion of an existing business.
9. It would also conflict with Policy CS4 which aims to ensure that development in the countryside is restricted to that which has an essential need to be in the countryside. There is no evidence of any particular need for the development to be in the countryside. Indeed, aside from some verbal expressions of interest from a vet and a blacksmith referred to briefly by the appellant, there is no substantive evidence of a need for the development at all. The same lack of demonstrable business need means paragraph 85¹ of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') provides little support to the proposal too.
10. Although these policies all pre-date the current iteration of the Framework, I consider they are consistent with it and can be afforded full weight.

Other Matters

11. The extract from the Local Transport Plan indicates that opportunities for economic develop along the A47 will be capitalised on. However, from the details provided, this appears to be a draft plan and in any case its policies do not form part of the development plan. I therefore give it little weight. The extract provided from the Council Economic Strategy merely states the A47 is a strategic route, which is not disputed.
12. The development would create jobs, but due to the small scale of the proposal, these would be limited in number. I therefore give this matter limited weight.

¹ Previously paragraph 84 as referred to by both parties

Conclusion

13. The development conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and the other material considerations do not suggest the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
14. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR