



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2022

by Ian Radcliffe BSc(Hons) MRTPI MCIEH DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/21/3285023

Agricultural Buildings, Short Drove, Holme, Cambridgeshire PE7 3PB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Holme Wood Property Developments against Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00819/PIP, is dated 19 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is residential development of up to 8 dwellings following demolition of existing buildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and permission in principle is refused.

Procedural Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. The amount of development is described as up to 8 dwellings. The appellant has clarified in his appeal statement that, consistent with the application form, in practice six to eight dwellings are proposed. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

5. This main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

Location

6. Applications for permission in principle are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for the area includes the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036

¹ 16 PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

(‘Local Plan’) that was adopted in 2019. The National Planning Policy Framework (‘the Framework’) is an important material consideration. The Local Plan predates the current edition of the Framework which was published in 2021. However, the policies of the Local Plan cited by the Council in its appeal statement are consistent with the Framework and are not at odds with it.

7. The development strategy of the Local Plan is contained within policy LP2. Its approach is to focus three quarters of new housing development in Spatial Planning Areas centred around the district’s traditional market towns and most sustainable centres.
8. The policy in relation to the remaining quarter of new housing is to disperse it across Key Service Centres and Small Settlements in order to support the vitality of these communities and provide flexibility and diversity in housing supply. This approach is consistent with paragraphs 78 and 79 of the Framework. Holme is defined as a Small Settlement. Subject to certain criteria, policy LP9 supports new development within a built-up area of a Small Settlement or on land that is well related to the built up area.
9. Holme is a compact village. The appeal site and the agricultural buildings it contains are located within a flat agricultural landscape within the open countryside adjacent to the built-up area of the village rather than within the built up area of the settlement itself.
10. As the appeal site is within the open countryside but well related to the built up area, policies LP9 and LP10 advise that development of it may still be supported if it accords with the specific opportunities allowed for through other policies of the Local Plan. In this regard, reference has only been made to policy LP33 of the Local Plan which allows for the replacement of rural buildings. However, one of its criteria requires that the building is redundant or disused. No evidence has been submitted on this point and I saw agricultural equipment, empty produce crates and a HGV trailer on the appeal site. As a result, it has not been demonstrated that the agricultural buildings on the site comply with this policy.
11. The village has a primary school, public house, village hall and church which are accessible on foot or by bicycle from the appeal site. However, as the appeal site is not within the built up area of Holme the level of services and infrastructure within the settlement and their accessibility is not relevant to the issue of whether the proposal complies with policy LP 9. As a consideration in support of the appeal, the range of service and infrastructure provision in the village is very limited and is insufficient to meet the day to day needs of residents. Consequently, this is a consideration of limited weight in favour of the proposal.
12. Paragraph 80 of the Framework supports the development of isolated homes in certain circumstances. However, as the appeal site is next to the built up area of the village it is common ground between the parties that homes on the appeal site would not be isolated. I agree with that assessment.
13. Taking into account all of these matters, and because it forms no part of the appellant’s case that the proposal would accord with the specific opportunities allowed for through other policies, such as rural exception housing, the location of the proposed housing would therefore be contrary to policies LP 9, LP 10 and LP 33 of the Local Plan and would harm its spatial strategy.

Proposed land use and amount of development

14. Of the development plan policies referred to by the Council in relation to these matters, I consider that only policy LP10, which requires amongst other matters that proposals recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, is relevant to the proposed land use and amount of development. This is because the appeal relates to permission in principle and the effect of the proposal on green infrastructure, the character and appearance of built development in the village and the quality of design covered by policies LP 3, LP 11 and LP 12 can only be assessed at the second ('technical details consent') stage.
15. As I have noted, the appeal site and the agricultural buildings it contains are located within a flat agricultural landscape within the open countryside next to the built-up part of the village. In public views from Short Drove and Church Street the site and its buildings are very much in keeping with the character and appearance of the open countryside of which it forms a part. Moreover, the views in between the buildings and across the front and rear beyond the site, especially from Church St, of the open countryside and Holme Fen / Great Fen National Nature Reserve in the distance reinforces this assessment.
16. Whilst the overall quantum of development created by up to eight dwellings could be less than that of the existing agricultural buildings, and effective use could be made of the site as supported by section 11 of the Framework, domestic paraphernalia, cars and manicured landscaping associated with a housing development would have an urbanising effect on the countryside. In the absence of policy support for the location of the proposal, the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area by the land use and amount of development proposed contrary to policy LP10 adds further weight against the proposal. Policy LP10, amongst other matters and consistent with paragraph 174 of the Framework, advises that all development should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Other Matters

17. High market demand exists for housing in the village. However, as the proposal is contrary to the spatial strategy of the development plan I attach little weight to this consideration in favour of the appeal.
18. It is not a matter in dispute that the local planning authority has a housing land supply of over 5 years. As a result, the so called 'tilted balance' contained in paragraph 11 the Framework is not a relevant consideration in this case.

Overall Conclusions

19. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan. The material considerations in favour of the proposal, namely the social and economic benefits of additional dwellings in a village with limited facilities and a high demand for housing, the employment associated with the construction of the dwellings and the spending of the additional households that would be created are insufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused and non-compliance with the development plan. Material considerations therefore do not indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Ian Radcliffe

Inspector