

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2022

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 January 2023

Appeal Reference: APP/W3520/W/21/3285040

Land to the North of Ashfield Road, Norton, Bury St Edmunds

- 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 R Southgate against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application (reference DC/21/03909, dated 7 July 2021) was refused by notice dated 2 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as follows: *"Outline planning application for the erection of two detached dwellings with detached garages with details of access included"*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary point

2. The application is made in outline, and matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for future consideration.

Main issue

3. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surroundings. In addition, it is necessary to consider the sustainability of the proposed development.

Reasons

4. Norton is a small village in the Suffolk countryside, located on the main A1088 north-south road. Development has extended along the main road and side roads, in a loose knit pattern that has produced intermittent buildings and groups of buildings along Ashfield Road, which is a minor country road.
5. The appeal site is located close to a sharp bend in the road, where there is a cluster of houses away from the more closely built up part of the settlement. A small new group of houses has recently been added to the eastern edge of this cluster, but there is a clear separation between them and other buildings to the west, with fields between the different groups of buildings along this part of the road frontage.

6. The appeal site is the front part of a larger open field that extends back from the roadside and widens out behind various residential properties. The main part of the field (at the rear) is used for keeping livestock and is subdivided by simple wire fences. The front area, which forms the appeal site, has evidently been used for storing building materials, equipment and the like, in association with the construction project on adjoining land. There is a small amount of such material still on the site and a large spoil heap has been created. An area has been roughly surfaced and defined, for vehicle manoeuvring. Even so, vegetation has become re-established on the land and it has effectively reverted to open rural land.
7. The appeal site itself is reasonably well screened from the road by a mature hedgerow. The adjoining houses have garden fences but both side boundaries are also set with trees and bushes. A ditch defines the western boundary. The northern boundary is less strongly defined, although the spoil heap and a pond that lies just outside the north-eastern part of the site are obvious landscape features.
8. It is now proposed that two detached dwellings should be erected on the land, with their associated garages. A suitable improved access would be constructed approximately at the centre of the site's road frontage.
9. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of promoting sustainable development and it acknowledges the importance of the natural and local environment, recognising "the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside", among other things. It also has the more general aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity.
10. Policies in the Development Plan have the same aims. In particular, Policy CS5 of the 'Core Strategy' (which was adopted in 2008) is a wide-ranging policy that seeks to promote good design, protecting the countryside's local character, among other things. Other Policies in the Development Plan promote sustainable development, in principle focussing new development on larger settlements that have a range of facilities and services.
11. The appeal site is part of an open area of land beyond the end of the existing developed frontage in this part of Ashfield Road. There is an extensive undeveloped frontage, with sporadic development along the country road, and the proposed development would add to scattered construction in the countryside, undermining the rural nature of the surroundings. The rural appearance of the surroundings would be further compromised and the character of the countryside in this locality would be significantly changed. The scheme would be unsympathetic to the existing local character and landscape setting and it would erode the rural character and appearance of the surroundings.
12. The proposed new development would add to the supply of houses in the District but the Council have demonstrated an adequate supply of housing land in accordance with planning policies and the pressure for additional housing land is limited, therefore. Moreover, the development that is now proposed would be poorly located in relation to services and facilities, notwithstanding the existence of some facilities further to the west, in Norton. Hence, the new

houses would not be well related to an existing substantial settlement and they would be contrary to both national and local policies that are intended to promote sustainable development.

13. In short, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character and appearance of the surroundings outweighs the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although only two houses are proposed in this case, such a project could be too often repeated, which would undermine planning policies even more obviously.
14. In reaching my conclusions I have considered the other cases to which I have been referred in the appeal submissions but I am conscious that each case must be determined on its own merits. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR