



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2023

by Jonathan Price BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/21/3286432

Moat Farm, Baylham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 8JW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs P Brinkley against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/21/04202, dated 27 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 1 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is application for 'Planning Permission in Principle Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Permission in Principle)(Amendment) Order 2017 - residential development of 1 to 4 dwellings'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Procedural Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two 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 two 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.

Main Issue

4. 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

5. The appeal site comprises a horse paddock with stables, lying to the rear of a newly built house. Adjacent is a dense array of modern farm buildings and some other houses. This forms part of a nexus of agricultural and industrial development around the junctions onto this section of the B1113, with a small amount of residential. This lies at a point roughly midway between the larger

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

settlements of Needham Market and Great Blakenham. The site lies outside any settlement defined in the Mid Suffolk Local Plan² (LP). Its saved policies and those of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy³ (CS) comprise the development plan. This is the starting point for considering this proposal, with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) a material consideration of great weight.

6. The newly built dwelling is large and so would screen any further housing from Lower Street. A public right of way runs alongside Moat Farm. The housing would be set into the farm complex so as not to encroach into open countryside visible from this. A scheme could be designed not to be overly prominent in the rural landscape. Therefore, this proposal would not result in any material harm to the character and appearance of this location.
7. However, there is little by way of regularly required household services and facilities here, such as a school or convenience store. Those available in the nearest main centres of Needham Market and Great Blakenham can be reached either by short car journeys or via a regular bus service. There are bus stops within walking distance of the appeal site. There is a roadside footway along the B1113, but such services are generally too far away to be conveniently accessible by walking. Cycling would be a more realistic option, although there is no dedicated lane to encourage this.
8. Despite the availability of a regular bus service, the need to travel outside the immediate area to meet essential needs means further households in this location would likely be mainly reliant on frequent private car journeys. There appears to be little social or other infrastructure here to warrant further housing in this location. The proposal would conflict with policies CS1, CS2 and LP H7 which restrict housing in the countryside, focusing this mostly to towns and key service centres, and to a lesser degree in primary and secondary villages. This fundamental conflict with the spatial strategy for new development means this proposal would be contrary to the development plan as a whole.
9. These policies adhere broadly to Framework objectives for promoting a sustainable pattern of development, including by aligning growth and infrastructure. By consolidating a small and sporadic amount of residential development in this location, the proposal for further housing would run counter to the Framework's aim for the planning system to actively manage patterns of growth in support of sustainable transport. As paragraph 105 advises, this is achieved by significant development being focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can then help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health.
10. Paragraph 105 concludes by reminding decision-makers that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. However, I do not accept this is to support housing in a rural location such as this where, notwithstanding the existence of a reasonable bus service, there would be a significant dependency on car travel. On this basis, I consider the site is unsuitable for a scheme of between one and four dwellings, having regard to the general absence of nearby services and facilities in this location.

² Mid Suffolk Local Plan adopted September 1998.

³ Mid Suffolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted September 2008.

Balance and Conclusion

11. Readily deliverable, the housing would provide a small social benefit in support of the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. There would be benefits also towards the local economy, from the construction and future servicing of the development and additional household expenditure. Whilst I place significant weight on the need to support economic growth, the benefits generated by a scheme of this small size would remain modest. The site arguably meets the Framework's definition of previously developed land, being occupied by stables rather than agricultural buildings. This mainly amounts to an absence of harm, insofar as this would not be a greenfield proposal.
12. The appellant cites the precedent of the Council having allowed the recently built house at Moat Farm⁴. This was granted at a time when the Council could demonstrate only marginally more than the five-year housing land supply required by the Framework. As of February 2022, the Council can demonstrate a significantly higher housing land supply of 9.54 years. There appears less need currently for allowing housing outside of policy to secure a minimum five-year land supply. I give very little weight to the consented dwelling at Moat Farm favouring the principle of further residential development in this location.
13. The appellant also seeks support from a recent appeal⁵ in the nearby village of Copdock, where the Inspector considered a proposal for a single dwelling in the countryside in a situation comparable to this. I have had regard to that decision and carried out a similar balancing exercise. However, as that appeal related to a different location and development plan, I am clearly not bound to reach the same conclusion.
14. The policies most important for determining this appeal, CS1, CS2 and H7, are out of date in being more restrictive of housing in the countryside than the Framework. I must therefore account for its paragraph 11 d) ii. However, the adverse impacts of allowing further housing in a location where few services are available would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the modest social and economic benefits identified, when assessed against Framework policies as a whole. As a material consideration, this would not indicate this appeal be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan, with which I have found there to be conflict as a whole. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

Jonathan Price

INSPECTOR

⁴ Council reference - 19/01639

⁵ Appeal Ref: APP/D3505/W/20/3248616 The Mane Riding Centre, Old London Road, Copdock and Washbrook, Ipswich, IP8 3JF dated 25th November 2020