



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 April 2023

by Paul Martinson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D2510/W/22/3311502

Land off Horncastle Road, Roughton Moor, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, LN10 6YQ

- 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 Barry Poucher against the decision of East Lindsey District Council.
 - The application Ref S/141/00531/22, dated 20 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of a dwelling.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the location of the proposed development would be acceptable having regard to the development plan policies and the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location

3. Policy SP3 of the East Lindsey Core Strategy Local Plan (2018) (the LP) sets out the Council's housing strategy. Within defined towns and large villages, housing growth on windfall sites is supported in '*appropriate locations*' within the settlement and outside of, but immediately adjacent to, the '*developed footprint*'. The developed footprint is defined as the continuous built form of the settlement and excludes individual buildings or groups of dispersed buildings which are clearly detached from the continuous built-up area of the settlement.
4. Both parties describe the appeal site as being within Roughton Moor parish. Roughton Moor is not a defined town or large village with regard to Policy SP3. However, the Council sets out in its Officer Report that '*part of the built form that falls within the parish of Roughton is considered to form part of the wider built form that is functionally linked to the large village of Woodhall Spa*'. The appellant adds that such an approach has been taken by the Council in recent planning applications¹, although the Council contends that these are different to the appeal proposal. The detail supplied in relation to these approvals is nonetheless very limited.

¹ Refs S/141/02205/20 and N/031/00877/19.

5. On the site visit I saw that continuous development to both sides of Horncastle Road extended well beyond the Woodhall Spa welcome sign, into Roughton Moor. However, closer to the appeal site, development to the northern side of Horncastle Road is much more sporadic with occasional residential, agricultural and commercial development being separated by woodland and open fields.
6. The appeal site itself, a predominantly grassed area, lies to the north of Horncastle Road and is separated from it by an open field. The site lies adjacent to a single dwelling, the Old Gatehouse. This dwelling is accessed from Horncastle Road via an extensive access track running the length of the field. Surrounded by woodland and fields to all sides, The Old Gatehouse has a somewhat rural context, being visually detached from any other built form and located a considerable distance from the continuous built-up area along Horncastle Road, particularly that on the northern side.
7. A commercial farm spraying enterprise comprising of several industrial style buildings is located to the east. However, this is separated from the appeal site by an area of woodland. Moreover, the buildings on this site are some distance away from the appeal site and the buildings themselves are separated from the development along the southern side of Horncastle Road by a substantial grassed area, in addition to the road.
8. As such, whilst it would be located adjacent to an existing dwelling, a new dwelling constructed on the appeal site would not form part of the continuous built-up area of Woodhall Spa, nor, given its context, would it likely be viewed as such, either from Horncastle Road or the Viking Way public footpath. Consequently, the appeal site does not form part of the developed footprint of Woodhall Spa, nor does it lie immediately adjacent to it, given its separation from the continuous built form. The proposal would therefore not represent an appropriate location for new housing development as required by Policy SP3 of the LP. This would represent a conflict with the Council's housing strategy.
9. I have had regard to the presence of the former railway line, now the route of the Viking Way. However, given that the route is predominantly bounded by fields and woodland to both sides, I am not convinced that its presence indicates that the appeal site is within or immediately adjacent to the developed footprint of the settlement.

Character and Appearance

10. The appeal site is visible alongside The Old Gatehouse in views across the open field from Horncastle Road. A loose hedge lies close to the boundary with the Viking Way which runs close to the northern boundary of the appeal site. Glimpses of industrial style buildings associated with the agricultural spraying enterprise are visible through the trees of the adjacent wooded area.
11. Nonetheless, the Viking Way in the vicinity of the appeal site has a distinctly rural character, located in close proximity to woodland, hedgerows, fields and paddocks. On the site visit I saw that the appeal site, being mostly grassed with some small shrubs and trees and lying adjacent to an open field and woodland, reinforces that rural character.
12. The construction of the proposed dwelling on the appeal site, with associated parking, garden, hardsurfacing and domestic paraphernalia would be easily visible at close quarters from the Viking Way. Notwithstanding the proximity to

the existing dwelling, such development would appear incongruous in this setting and would urbanise this part of the Viking Way. I accept that it is proposed to plant a native hedge along the boundary here, however, it would be some time before this becomes established and before any realistic screening benefits are realised, if at all, during which time the proposed development would remain visible. Even if a hedge were to grow to sufficient height, visibility would increase significantly when it is not in leaf.

13. Though its design and form seek to minimise the visibility of the proposal from Horncastle Road, the proposal would still be discernible when seen across the open field. In these views it would appear visually disconnected from the settlement and would adversely affect the rural character.
14. For the above reasons, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policy SP10 of the LP which, in summary and amongst other things, seeks to ensure new development is well-designed and maintains and enhances the character of the District's towns, villages and countryside. There would also be conflict with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework which sets out that planning decisions should ensure new developments add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

15. The appellant has put forward a number of benefits arising from the proposed development. I accept that the proposal would add to housing supply in the area, would contribute to Council tax, and would provide economic benefit from its construction and occupation. However, these benefits are limited by the small scale of the proposal.
16. The information with regard to the proposed biodiversity net gain is relatively limited at this stage, nonetheless, even if the site were 'rewilded' as suggested, given the relatively small site area, such a benefit would inevitably be limited. Similarly, sustainability benefits in terms of incorporation of solar panels and sustainable construction methods into the design, would be limited by the small-scale nature of the scheme.
17. Collectively the benefits considered above would not amount to material considerations that justify taking an approach contrary to the development plan and housing strategy, having regard to the requirements of s. 38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Martinson

INSPECTOR