



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 October 2023

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/W/23/3321844

Twineham Grange Farm, Bob Lane, Twineham, West Sussex RH17 5NH

- 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 Paolo Packham against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/22/3721, dated 6 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 29 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is two holiday lets with associated parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal has been made in outline, with all matters apart from access, layout and scale reserved for future consideration. Plans that accompanied the application show some landscaping proposals. I have considered these details solely on the basis that they have been submitted for illustrative purposes.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for the development, bearing in mind development plan policies and its accessibility by a range of transport modes.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a level area of land that is partly in use as a gravel carpark for two single storey holiday cottages, which have been created through the conversion of a traditional flint building. A new housing development is under construction immediately to the north, on land that the evidence indicates was formerly a cheese factory. This development and the holiday cottages are surrounded by undeveloped agricultural land. Consequently, the site lies outside any of the built-up boundaries identified by the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (the Local Plan), and is in the countryside.
5. Policy DP12 of the Local Plan says that the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. The policy only permits development in the countryside where it maintains or, where possible, enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district, and is supported by a specific policy in the Local Plan. The site is closely associated with the construction site to the north and the existing holiday lets to the east. Furthermore, it would be visually segregated from the surrounding fields by existing hedgerows and trees, so it would not appear as an extension of built

development into the wider countryside. Consequently, it is not disputed that the proposal would maintain the quality of the rural landscape. Nevertheless, accordance with Policy DP12 would still rely on specific support from another policy in the Local Plan.

6. Policy DP14 of the Local Plan says that new small-scale economic development within the countryside, including tourism-related proposals, will be permitted provided that, amongst other things, they support sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy and, where possible, utilise previously developed land (PDL). It is contended that the site is PDL, because it was part of the previous cheese factory, and formerly accommodated a building. This is a matter of dispute, but as the policy does not limit development to PDL, it is not a determinative issue. Furthermore, although the Council argues that the focus of the policy is on the re-use of existing buildings, it does not exclude the construction of new buildings. Consequently, if the proposal were to support sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy, it would be supported by Policy DP14.
7. Policy DP21 of the Local Plan requires development to be sustainably located, to minimise the need for travel. However, it does acknowledge that there might be circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside, such as rural economic uses that are supported by Policy DP14. Nevertheless, Policy DP21 still requires that appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car, such as the provision of, and access to, safe and convenient routes for walking, cycling and public transport, including suitable facilities for secure and safe cycle parking, have been fully explored and taken up.
8. In this case, the holiday lets would be about two kilometres by road from Twineham, which is the nearest recognisable settlement. However, there are few services or facilities available here beyond a school and a church. There are no shops where holiday makers could obtain day to day goods. The nearest settlements with a range of services and convenience stores are significantly further afield. I have not been provided with any evidence that there are any bus services within easy reach of the site, and the nearest A roads, where such services are likely, are more than two kilometres away.
9. The roads connecting the site to Twineham, the A road, and the larger settlements, are mainly country lanes with no lighting or segregated footpaths. They are not, therefore, suitable for walking, particularly during hours of darkness. Whilst the surrounding terrain is not particularly hilly, the long distance from the accommodation to day-to-day facilities makes it unlikely that visitors would regularly cycle to obtain goods and services. Given the nature of the surrounding roads this would not, in any event, be a safe option outside daylight hours. It is contended that the site is adjacent to the local footpath network, with easy access to The Royal Oak pub. However, this would involve a walk of about 1.6 kilometres via Bob Lane, along roads without footways or lighting. I have not been provided with any evidence to identify a shorter off-road route. It is, therefore, unlikely that occupants would choose to make this journey by foot outside daylight hours.
10. In view of the above factors, holidaymakers in the proposed accommodation would be highly reliant on the private car for travelling to the site, and for most of their journeys to obtain goods and services during their stay. The site is not,

therefore, sustainably located as required by Policy DP21, so would not support sustainable growth in accordance with Policy DP14.

11. I am mindful that the proposal would make a positive contribution to the rural economy in terms of employment, and the potential for occupants to spend money at local businesses. However, the scale of the development is modest, and occupants would be largely car-borne, so would not necessarily use rural shops and services. Consequently, this benefit carries only moderate weight, and does not outweigh the conflict with Policies DP14 and DP21. I am also aware that there are other tourist sites in the locality. However, I have not been provided with any information regarding the planning circumstances surrounding them, so I can draw no meaningful comparisons with the appeal before me.
12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the lack of any realistic alternative means of transport to the private car means that the site is not a suitable location for the development. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies DP12, DP14 and DP21 of the Local Plan which, taken together, seek to limit development in the countryside, whilst allowing for sustainably located tourism-related proposals.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR