



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2023

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/W/23/3318249

**Rectory Farm Buildings, Cranford Road, Great Addington,
Northamptonshire NN14 4BQ**

- 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 Colin Williams (Lodge Park Ltd) against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref NE/22/01504/FUL, dated 22 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of Existing Buildings and Erection of five detached two-storey dwellings, detached car barn and replacement vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The development was originally refused planning permission for several reasons. Of these, one pertained to noise levels. Following the submission of this appeal, the Council confirmed that this reason had been withdrawn. I have no reason to disagree with the conclusion reached by the Council and have therefore proceeded accordingly.
3. The appeal documentation includes some revised plans. However, the degree of changes between these and the plans formally considered by the Council are relatively small. Therefore, I do not believe that it would cause prejudice to any party to have regard to these plans. I have therefore proceeded on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues relevant to this appeal are:
 - the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
 - the suitability of the site as a location for the proposed residential development, with particular regards to the requirements of the Development Plan.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is in the countryside and predominantly contains areas of hardstanding, although there is some planting near to the front boundary. The appeal site is near to some buildings, including dwellings. However, most of

these structures appear to be agricultural in nature. Buildings are typically arranged either individually, or in small clusters. This means that the character of the appeal site and the surrounding area is mainly rural and open.

6. It appears that the site has previously been used as a bus depot. However, the site currently features relatively few buildings. It therefore has a relatively open character consistent with the generally rural surroundings of the appeal site.
7. The proposed development would result in an increase in the overall level of built form. This would be exacerbated by the scale of the buildings in addition to the installation of areas of hard surfacing and boundary treatments. In reaching this view, I have had regard to the fact that there is some evidence before me that indicates that there is a need in the local area for smaller houses.
8. This effect would be exacerbated by the layout of the development. By reason of the number of houses proposed, there would be many car parking spaces. This would create a more engineered appearance, in conflict with the prevailing verdant character. This adverse effect would be exacerbated should an area for the storage of refuse be provided.
9. Given this increase would be viewable alongside the existing buildings that are near to the appeal site, a large cluster of buildings would emanate. This would conflict with the prevailing character in that it would contrast with the presence of small groups of buildings elsewhere in the surrounding area.
10. In addition, owing to the number of buildings that are included in the development, and their proportions, the proposal would result in a loss of the existing open and rural character that is a feature of the wider area.
11. This means that the proposed development would result in a greater urbanising effect, which would conflict with the prevailing rural form. Therefore, the development would appear incongruous.
12. The proposed development would be visible from several different vantage points in the surrounding area. This would include neighbouring land and buildings. In addition, the development would be readily perceptible from multiple points in the surrounding area, such as the road. There is also a footpath nearby that crosses Cranford Road. The development would also be viewable walkers crossing the road at this point. In result, the development would be experienced by a great number of people, which would render it a prominent addition to the locality.
13. The proposal represents a redevelopment of the site. However, the proposal would result in an overall increase in the quantum of development. This would include the greater height and number of buildings, when compared with the existing level of development. In result, the appeal scheme would have a much greater effect upon the character of the surrounding area than the existing development has. Therefore, the presence of the existing development does not overcome my previous concerns.
14. It appears that planning permission has previously been granted to erect new dwellings at the appeal site. However, even if this planning permission were to be implemented, it would have a lesser effect upon the character of the

surrounding area owing to the lower scale of development. This does not allow me to forego my preceding findings.

15. I understand that no objections to the development were received by the local Parish Council. Whilst this is a matter of note, it is only one of the matters that must be considered. It therefore does not outweigh my previous concerns.
16. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development, in this regard, would conflict with Policies 8 and 30 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2016) (the JCS). Amongst other matters, these seek to ensure that developments create a distinctive local character; and recognise the need to accommodate smaller households with an emphasis on the provision of small and medium sized dwellings.

Suitability of the site

17. In considering this appeal, I have been directed towards the requirements of Policy 13 of the JCS. Amongst other matters, this seeks to ensure that developments are not constructed in rural areas unless specific circumstances are met. The purpose of this is to ensure that the proposed developments are located in the most appropriate locations and are of a suitable scale.
18. In this regard, the evidence before me indicates that the proposed development would be made available for occupation on market tenures. This means that the development would not respond to local need, for the development could be occupied by individuals that originate from any locality. This means that the proposed development would not meet one of the exceptions of the policy.
19. In consequence, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In addition, the proposed development would not be of an unusual, or high-quality design. In consequence, it would not meet one of the exceptions of the local plan.
20. The appeal site is separated from the nearest settlement by a notable distance. This means that the future occupiers of the development would need to travel to access the services and facilities that they are likely to frequently require.
21. This is a concern given that the appeal site is some distance away from the nearest bus stop. Furthermore, the surroundings also lack separate pavements or environments for cyclists. The surrounding road network also lacks street lighting. Therefore, the lack of a welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists is likely to result in an increase in the overall level of journeys by private vehicles.
22. In result, I do not believe that the appeal site is particularly accessible by means other than private vehicle. Therefore, the location of the proposed development does not overcome my concerns arising from the breach of the Development Plan.
23. The development would be located near to some existing houses. However, these are limited in number. Therefore, the proposed development would result in a significant increase in the number of people resident in the vicinity of the appeal site. Therefore, there would be a significantly greater number of journeys by private cars being made.

24. Owing to the location of the appeal site, the proposed development could be regarded as being an infill. However, the immediate surroundings do not have the character, or the services indicative of the appeal site being located in a settlement. This means that the proposal cannot be regarded as being an infill in a settlement. The appeal site is also not in Addington given that it is separated from this village by several fields.
25. Planning permission appears to have been given to erect a smaller number of houses at the appeal site. I do not have the full information regarding the planning circumstances of these before me, which means that I can only give this matter a limited amount of weight. Nonetheless, the previous planning permission was for a smaller number of homes. It therefore follows that the previous approval would have given rise to a smaller increase in the number of journeys being made. Therefore, the effects of the previous approval would be different to the scheme before me. The presence of the previous scheme does not therefore allow me to disregard my previous concerns.
26. The proposed development would replace a site that has been used for commercial activities. However, I have limited evidence before me regarding the scale of these now ceased activities. However, the proposed dwellings would be of a relatively large scale and therefore there would be a significant number of journeys being made to and from the appeal site. Therefore, the previous use of the site does not allow me to forego my preceding findings.
27. I therefore conclude that the appeal site represents an inappropriate location for the proposed development. The development, in this regard, would conflict with the requirements of Policies 11 and 13 of the JCS. Amongst other matters, these require that development in the rural areas be limited to that required to support a prosperous rural economy or to meet a locally arising need; and in open countryside, away from established settlements, permission will not normally be granted for new built residential development, unless specific exceptions are met.

Other Matters

28. The appeal site is near to the Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I do not need to give this matter further consideration.
29. I understand that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect upon highway safety. However, this is only one of all the matters that must be assessed and therefore does not overcome my findings in respect of the main issues.
30. The proposed development could generate some economic benefits, in addition to improvements to biodiversity and an increase in the local housing supply. However, these benefits due to the nature of the proposed development are relatively small and would not outweigh the significant harm as previously identified.

Conclusion

31. The proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would be inappropriately located. The scheme would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no other material considerations which indicate the decision should be

made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed, and planning permission should be refused.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR