The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2024

by F Wilkinson BSc (Hons), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/N2535/W/24/3342390
Grange Farm, Main Street, Broxholme, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN1 2NG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr C Sutcliffe of T C Sutcliffe against the decision of West Lindsey District Council.
- The application reference is 147512.
- The development is the retention of static caravan.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form. The Council's decision notice describes the development as the change of use of land for the retention of a static caravan for the use as AirBnB accommodation. Based on the submitted evidence, this more fully describes the development. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:

   - the principle of the development with regard to its location; and
   - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Principle of Development

4. Policy S1 of the 2023 adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (the Local Plan) sets out the development strategy for the area, based on a settlement hierarchy. The aim is to make the most of existing services and facilities, delivering growth to where it is most needed, and to provide associated opportunities to regenerate urban areas, provide new jobs and new homes in accessible locations, and focus infrastructure improvements where they will have the greatest effect.

5. Broxholme, which comprises a small cluster of properties, is not listed in the settlement hierarchy in Policy S1. For development plan purposes, the appeal site is within the countryside.

6. The appellant's evidence indicates that the caravan is used by holiday makers, but also trades people, with examples given as workers on University of Lincoln student accommodation and a housing construction site at one of the settlements in the area.

7. Policy S43 of the Local Plan supports proposals for visitor accommodation in the countryside where it has been demonstrated that one of the three listed circumstances apply. Criterion f) supports visitor accommodation where Part E of Local Plan Policy S5 has been satisfied. The requirements of Part E of Policy S5 include where the rural location of the enterprise is justifiable to maintain or enhance the rural economy or the location is justified by means of proximity to existing established businesses or natural features. Criterion g) requires demonstration that locations within settlements are unsuitable for the scale and nature of the proposal or there is an overriding benefit to the local, or wider, economy and/or community and/or environment for locating away from such built up areas. There is no clear evidence to suggest that the development relates to an existing visitor facility which is seeking redevelopment or expansion and so criterion h) is not relevant.

8. Additionally, Part F of Policy S5 allows for agricultural diversification proposals which support farm enterprises.

9. While there may be visitor attractions in the area and the wider farm holding offers access to recreational facilities, there is no compelling evidence for me to conclude that the development is justified by its proximity to existing established businesses or natural features. No clear evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the development cannot be accommodated in a settlement or that it offers an overriding benefit to the environment by being away from such locations.

10. There would be benefits to the local economy from occupants of the caravan through spend in the area. This would assist with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) objectives for supporting a prosperous rural economy. However, the economic benefits would be limited to those from a single unit of accommodation. Within this context, and based on the evidence before me, I am not persuaded that the development is justified to maintain or enhance the rural economy or that it provides an overriding benefit to the local or wider economy and/or community.

11. Some information has been submitted by the appellant on the reduction in income from cropped land that it is stated is attributable to the change in weather and the move from the basic payment scheme to the sustainable farming scheme. An overall figure on potential income from the AirBnB use is also provided although this is not supported by any explanation or analysis. The financial information that is presented is very limited in extent. It is not sufficient to demonstrate that the farming enterprise would be uneconomic without the development. Nor is it possible to fully understand the extent to which the development supports the farm.

12. Parts E and F of Policy S5 both require developments to be locationally appropriate.

13. Broxholme does not appear to have any services or facilities including public transport. Saxilby, a Large Village defined in Policy S1, and Bransby are not too far in distance terms. However, these would have to be accessed along

predominantly unlit roads with no pavements which would be disincentives to travelling on foot or by bicycle, especially during darker winter months or in inclement weather.

14. The appellant has identified the existence of a local cycle track network that provides access to Doddington Hall, and the footpath links from the site, which I appreciate offer an alternative to the private motor vehicle. However, the evidence does not persuade me that these would likely be a realistic substitute to access a broader range of local attractions, services, or facilities that occupiers of the caravan may be interested in or require.

15. I recognise that opportunities for sustainable transport solutions varies between rural and urban areas. Nonetheless, occupants would, in general, be largely dependent on the private motor vehicle to access the caravan as well as services, facilities, and tourist destinations. The number of vehicle movements may be modest given the single unit of accommodation. However, that does not in itself justify the provision of accommodation in a location where occupiers would have a dependence on the private motor vehicle.

16. I am satisfied that the location of the development would not result in conflict with neighbouring uses. This is due to the nature and scale of the development and its separation distance from nearby dwellings.

17. I acknowledge the support that the Framework gives to achieving a prosperous rural economy, including enabling the development and diversification of agricultural businesses and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments. However, it has not been demonstrated that a countryside location is justified for the development due to its locational, economic, or environmental benefits. I therefore conclude that the principle of the development with regard to its location would not be acceptable as, without sufficiently compelling reason to depart therefrom, it would undermine the Council's development strategy. As such, the development conflicts with the requirements of Policies S5 and S43 of the Local Plan as summarised above.

Character and Appearance

18. Broxholme contains a small number of mainly residential properties, which are predominantly red brick with pantile roofs. The village has a rural character. The surrounding countryside is characterised by its predominantly rural agricultural landscape. Grange Farm, where the caravan is sited, contains some buildings which have an agricultural character.

19. When approaching the village from the north, the caravan is screened by the farm buildings until in relatively close proximity. When travelling through the village from the south the caravan is well screened by buildings and vegetation which would likely continue to provide some filtering of views in winter due to the density of planting. Its visual prominence is further reduced by its set back location from the road and the boundary fence.

20. Glimpsed views of the caravan are possible from the road to the north through limited gaps in the hedgerow. However, such views are fleeting, and the caravan is seen in the context of the farm buildings and against the backdrop of vegetation and the residential properties to the south, which is also the case when viewed from the footpath to the north. This, along with its small scale

means that the development has a very limited impact on the wider landscape.

21. The appellant states that the caravan could be clad with timber boarding and that pantile effect panels could be added to the roof. Further landscaping is also proposed. These measures would help to integrate the caravan into its surroundings and could be secured by condition were I minded to allow the appeal.

22. The development is not prominent in the majority of views from within or towards the village and it does not appear visually dominant in this context. With the mitigation measures identified above, the development would not appear as an alien feature, nor would it detract from the rural character of Broxholme and surrounding countryside. Its low height means that it does not obscure views of All Saints Church or the other nearby buildings.

23. I therefore conclude that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, there is no conflict with Policy S53 of the Local Plan which, in summary, requires proposals to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, having regard to its local context.

Other Matters

24. While there may be no objections from the Highway Authority, the absence of objection does not render the scheme acceptable. The income from the development may help to maintain public rights of way on the appellant's land but this does not in itself justify departing from policy.

Conclusion

25. I am satisfied that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the area. However, based on the evidence that is before me, it has not been demonstrated that the development is in a suitable location and so it undermines the planned approach to the distribution of development. The Framework states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. The conflict with the Council's development strategy is therefore a matter which I afford significant weight to.

26. There will be some economic benefits from the provision of the accommodation which weigh positively for the scheme. Nonetheless, with only a single unit, I do not afford such benefits very significant weight.

27. It follows that the harm and related policy conflict are not outweighed by the benefits of the development.

28. For the reasons given, the scheme does not comply with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

F Wilkinson

INSPECTOR