



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2024

by G Dring BA (Hons) MA MRTPI MAUDE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/24/3342274

Land adjacent Last Transmissions, Ipswich Road, Newbourne, Suffolk

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr C Last against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/24/0284/OUT.
 - The development proposed is erection of a detached dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application was made in outline with all matters other than access reserved for future consideration. Plans depicting layout were submitted with the application for illustrative purposes, and I have considered them on that basis only.
3. The appeal site is within the recreational disturbance zone of influence of a number of European Sites. The Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires the decision maker to consider whether or not the proposal could adversely affect the integrity of the site. The Council's second reason for refusal related to a lack of relevant information being submitted in this regard. Nevertheless, further information has been provided with the appeal which the Council consider to be adequate. I will return to this matter later in my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the appeal site would be in a suitable location for housing, having regard to its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Policy SCLP3.2 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Adopted 23 September 2020 (LP) categorises Newbourne as a small village within the settlement hierarchy. Newbourne has no defined settlement boundary and therefore under Policy SCLP3.3 of the LP it is identified as countryside for the purposes of the development plan. Policy SCLP5.3 identifies that outside of defined settlement boundaries, residential development will be limited to certain types of development as set out in a list of criteria, including limited development within existing clusters.

6. Policy SCLP5.4 of the LP refers to housing in clusters in the countryside and there is no dispute between the parties that the appeal site would be within such a cluster. However, Policy SCLP11.9 of the LP specifically refers to the village of Newbourne and its former Land Settlement Association Holdings (LSAH). This policy identifies circumstances where new residential development would be supported in Newbourne, including where the scale and design of a proposal would not harm the character of the former LSAH.
7. Policy SCLP11.9 therefore appears to be the most relevant to the case before me, although I accept both policies require that the proposed development amounts to infilling along an existing road frontage, while avoiding harm to the character and appearance of the area.
8. The LSAH in Newbourne had a significant effect on the character, appearance and pattern of development in the settlement. It derives from an experimental inter-war government scheme to provide land-based employment for unemployed workers from depressed industrial areas. It resulted in modest houses within large plots, many with horticultural glasshouses. Another key characteristic is the large open spaces along the road frontage between buildings which has been retained in parts of the settlement.
9. The appeal site comprises a rectangular area of grassland with frontage onto Ipswich Road. To the rear is a commercial building occupied by the company Last Transmissions. To the east beyond the access road and behind a substantial boundary hedgerow is a single storey timber clad building that serves the adjacent Steadings Holiday Park. Further east along the road frontage, adjacent to the access road into the holiday park, is a dwelling and some static caravans.
10. The adjacent holiday park does appear somewhat as an anomaly to the general character and appearance of the settlement. To the west and directly opposite are dwellings situated within spacious plots that appear to be associated with nurseries/smallholdings. The plots along the majority of Ipswich Road are characterised by their extensive widths and the open and undeveloped spaces between buildings. Whilst the appeal site is not subject to any important open space designation, given its open and undeveloped character, it does contribute positively to the openness and spaciousness of this part of Newbourne.
11. The appeal proposal would represent infill development within the existing road frontage. The Last Transmissions building is existing and already appears as being sited in a backland location given the set back position from the road. The infilling of the frontage gap would not be particularly harmful in terms of reinforcing the more limited relationship between the Last Transmissions building and the road frontage. Development on the appeal site would also not encroach into the surrounding countryside.
12. However, the proposal would result in built form on an undeveloped area of land, that provides clear visual separation between the holiday park and the dwelling to the west. This would be at odds with the pattern of development in the local area. During my site visit I observed that the appeal site has a more maintained appearance than other undeveloped areas along Ipswich Road, with the grass cut short. Nevertheless, the appeal site still appears undeveloped and provides a clear break in built form along the road frontage.

13. I accept that views across the site include the existing commercial building, which is set back from the road, with woodland beyond. In the surrounding area I found that views of horticultural and agricultural type buildings in a set back position were visible across other undeveloped frontage areas. This is therefore not an uncommon feature in the vicinity of the site.
14. The appeal site is narrower than the significant majority of existing plots along this part of Ipswich Road. A modest dwelling could be designed at the reserved matters stage that would be in keeping with some of the smaller dwellings within Newbourne. Nevertheless, it has not been demonstrated that the space around any such dwelling and the separation between the built form and the side boundaries of the plot would not be significantly less than those that form the prevailing character of this area. As a result, the proposal would appear incongruous in the street scene.
15. I have been referred to a planning permission for the siting of three holiday lodges on a similar infill plot to the east of the appeal site within the wider holiday park site, which was granted by the Council. I witnessed at least one holiday lodge in situ on this plot of land during my site visit, above the front boundary hedgerow. This has altered the character of this plot of land. However, it is a different type of development to that proposed by the appeal submission and appears as an anomaly rather than changing the prevailing character of the area set out above. I therefore attribute limited weight to this as a consideration.
16. Whilst I am told that there are other examples of infill development that are similar to that proposed, I have not been directed to any specific information in this regard. I did note during my site visit that there are varying patterns of development in other parts of Newbourne, where development is less sparsely located. Nevertheless, this does not alter my findings above about the pattern of development and its contribution to the character and appearance of the area around the appeal site.
17. I therefore find that the appeal site would not be in a suitable location for housing, having regard to its effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policies SCLP5.3, SCLP5.4, SCLP11.1 and SCLP11.9 of the LP. These policies seek to implement a spatial approach to the delivery of new houses whilst ensuring that development is not harmful to the character and appearance of the area, including the former LSAH.

Other Matters

18. The proposal would result in a new dwelling on a small site which would contribute to the housing supply. It would also result in economic benefits during the construction phase and in the longer term with future occupants spending in the local area. I note the interested party support in this respect. However, given the scale of the proposal these benefits would be limited.
19. The appeal site is not isolated, and the appellant asserts that future occupants would be able to access services and facilities within Newbourne as well as a bus service that provides access to Ipswich. It is also stated that the provision of a dwelling in this location would support other nearby settlements and add to the vitality of rural communities. Even if I were to agree, this consideration would not outweigh the harm I have identified above.

20. It is asserted that the proposal would not impact on any designated heritage assets or protected species, that there would be sufficient and appropriate access and parking, that there is no known risk of contamination and that the site is not at risk of flooding. A lack of harm in these respects does not weigh in favour of the proposal.
21. As identified above, the appeal site is located within the recreational disturbance zone of influence for a number of European Sites, as identified in the Council's second reason for refusal. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, as set out above, it is not necessary to address the effect of the proposed development on European Sites in any further detail.

Conclusion

22. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

G Dring

INSPECTOR