



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2024

by G Dring BA (Hons) MA MRTPI MAUDE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/24/3343348

Land at 106 School Road, Runcton Holme, Downham Market PE33 0AW

- 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 L Clark against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00233/O.
 - The development proposed is residential development – one dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application was made in outline, with all matters reserved for future consideration. Plans depicting the access, layout, landscaping, scale and appearance were submitted with the application for illustrative purposes, and I have considered them on that basis only.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the appeal site would be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the spatial strategy set out in local policies and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Policy CS02 of the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Local Development Framework - Core Strategy Adopted Version July 2011 (CS) identifies Runcton Holme as a 'rural village' under the Council's settlement hierarchy. This policy states that in rural villages, limited minor development will be permitted which meets the needs of the settlement and helps to sustain existing services in accordance with Policy CS06 which relates to development in rural areas.
5. There is no dispute between the parties that the appeal site lies outside of the defined development limit for Runcton Holme, meaning that it is within the countryside for the purposes of the development plan. Policy CS06 of the CS states that beyond the village and in the countryside, the strategy will be to protect the countryside for its intrinsic character and beauty.
6. I have not been referred to any other CS policies that would provide support for the proposed development outside of any defined development limit. The appeal proposal would therefore conflict with the overarching spatial strategy set out in the CS.

7. However, the appeal site is situated between two existing dwellings on School Road. Existing residential development extends further in both directions along this side of School Road and the primary school is located opposite the appeal site. Other than the social and recreational facilities located to the northwest of the appeal site that provides a break in built form, there is existing development along at least one side of School Road when travelling from the appeal site into the centre of the village. A separate footpath located directly outside of the appeal site provides pedestrian access to the rest of the village including the limited services and facilities on offer.
8. I therefore find that whilst the row of dwellings that the appeal site is situated in between forms the edge of the settlement, the appeal site does appear as part of the built up area of Runcton Holme, rather than appearing as part of the countryside, in visual and spatial terms.
9. Nevertheless, Policy CS06 of the CS also identifies that in the rural villages, such as Runcton Holme, more modest levels of development, as detailed in Policy CS09 will be permitted where, amongst other things, it can be achieved without detriment to the character of the surrounding area.
10. The appeal site comprises an area of garden land to the side and rear of 106 School Road. An existing single storey side extension to No 106 would be removed to facilitate the development. The area immediately around the appeal site consists of a row of twelve 2 storey semi-detached dwellings. There are characteristic gaps between these dwellings and where built form is located closer to the side boundaries it generally drops to single storey in height which provides for subservient and less prominent built form. Even with the presence of soft landscaping along the roadside which provides varying levels of screening, this existing arrangement provides a sense of spaciousness along this part of School Road which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area.
11. Whilst I noted during my site visit that a number of the semi-detached dwellings within the row surrounding the appeal site had been altered and extended, the distinctive gaps between them generally persist, particularly at first floor level. Consequently, the spaciousness that contributes to the character of the area remains a prevailing and positive feature.
12. The appeal proposal would disrupt the distinct pattern of development along this part of School Road, inserting a detached dwelling amongst a row of semi-detached dwellings. The infilling of a gap between 106 and 104 School Road would also significantly erode the spaciousness of the surrounding area by substantially reducing a characteristic gap between the existing dwellings. This disruption to the pattern of development and erosion of the spaciousness of the area would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
13. I therefore find that the appeal site would not be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the spatial strategy set out in local policies and the character and appearance of the area.
14. Whilst I accept that the appeal site is outside of the defined development limit, on the ground, it does appear as being within the settlement rather than the countryside. I therefore attribute only limited weight to the conflict with Policies CS02 and CS09 of the CS with regard to the spatial strategy approach. These policies seek, amongst other things, that development in the

countryside is limited and that modest levels of development are permitted to maintain the vitality of communities such as those within rural villages.

15. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the limited harm to the spatial strategy, I conclude that the proposal would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CS01, CS02, CS06 and CS08 of the CS. I attach significant weight to this conflict, given the long lasting effects that would result. These policies seek, amongst other things, that developments maintain local character and that they are of high quality design, that they respond to the context and character of places and support sustainable development objectives.
16. The Council's reason for refusal also refers to Policy DM1 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan Adopted September 2016, however, this policy is reflective of the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and is not specifically relevant to the case before me.

Other Matters

17. The appeal proposal would contribute one new home on a small site to the housing supply, which could be built out relatively quickly. The proposal would also provide economic benefits during the construction phase and after with future occupants supporting local facilities and services. However, given the limited scale of the proposal any benefits would be modest.
18. It is asserted that the primary school has low numbers on roll currently and that the proposal could provide support, given it would provide an additional family home. However, given the scale of the proposal and the lack of any substantive evidence on this matter, I find it likely that any support would be very limited.
19. The appellant asserts that the Council's allocation for 2030 dwellings which makes up a large part of the housing supply in the emerging Local Plan is unconfirmed. Nevertheless, the Council has identified that it can demonstrate a sufficient housing supply currently. The appellant has not provided any substantive evidence to the contrary on this matter.
20. The appellant refers to other policy provisions which provide support for small scale infill development in smaller villages and hamlets where there are no settlement boundaries, nor are there any services and facilities. However, the appeal site is not identified under the spatial strategy as being within a smaller village or a hamlet and these other considerations are not therefore applicable in this case.
21. A lack of objections from statutory consultees or interested parties does not weigh in favour of the proposal.
22. I have been referred by the Council to two appeal decisions at sites in Marshland St James, a different settlement within the same Borough. I have been provided with the appeal decisions and the proposed site layout plans for these other schemes. Whilst in both examples provided, the sites were outside of a defined development limit, they both appeared to comprise of paddock land with more sporadic development in the surrounding area. I therefore find that the specific circumstances of the appeal site before me, including its

surrounding context, current use and relationship with the settlement is not comparable to these other cases.

Conclusion

23. I conclude that 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