The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 April 2024

by M Russell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/A2525/W/23/3327835
World's End Road, Tydd St Mary, Wisbech PE13 5QW

- 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 and Mrs R Howse against the decision of South Holland District Council.
- The application Ref is H21-0100-23.
- The development proposed is described as 'residential development'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is in outline form with all detailed matters reserved for subsequent approval. The application form confirms that the proposal would result in the provision of one residential unit. I have considered the layout and access details on the 'Block Plan' (Drawing no 1192/01) on the basis that they are indicative only.

3. Following submission of the appeal, the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 19 December 2023 and updated on 20 December 2023. The parts of the Framework most relevant to the appeal have not substantively changed from the previous version. Consequently, this update to national policy does not fundamentally alter the main parties' cases or prejudice their position at appeal, and it is not necessary to seek further comments in respect of the Framework.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the development including, but not limited to, the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) (LP) sets out the Council's 'Spatial Strategy' with the area's 'Sub-Regional Centres' and 'Main Service Centres' identified as 'Areas where development is to be directed'. Tydd St Mary is a 'Minor Service Centre' and is placed lower in the spatial strategy under the 'Areas of limited development opportunity'. It can be seen from 'Policies Map Inset Map No 25' of the LP that the site sits outside the identified settlement boundary of Tydd St Mary and is in the 'Countryside' for the purposes of applying Policy 1. The policy confirms that development in the

countryside will be permitted that is necessary to such a location and/or where it can be demonstrated that it meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits.

6. The Council has confirmed that it is able to demonstrate a 5.9 year supply of deliverable housing land and this has not been disputed by the appellant. In the circumstances, there does not appear to be any urgent need to locate the proposed dwelling in the countryside. Indeed, I have seen no objective evidence to suggest that the proposed development is necessary in this location. Furthermore, it is likely that any social, community or environmental benefits associated with the proposed dwelling would at most be of a modest scale. There is nothing before me to suggest that any benefits of the proposal would be of a magnitude that could be said to meet the sustainable development needs of the area in any of these respects.

7. I accept that the site is situated close to dwellings within the settlement boundary of Tydd St Mary and so is not isolated for the purposes of applying the Framework. While there is no footpath or street lighting on World's End Road, the site would have comparable accessibility credentials to the dwellings on this road that are located within the settlement boundary. Given the limited level of amenities within Tydd St Mary, occupiers of the proposal would need to travel further afield to access a wider range of services and facilities. However, I accept that bus services operating through the village would provide an alternative option to the private motor vehicle for travelling further afield.

8. Nevertheless, while the above factors indicate that the site would perform adequately from an accessibility perspective, this is a usually expected requirement and does not equate to a benefit. It is also not the only factor in considering whether the proposal would meet the sustainable development needs of the area. Sustainable patterns of development are also important for other reasons, including for example to ensure the sustainable use of land and to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

9. The appeal site comprises of a field of rough vegetation. Dwellings within the village extents are located close by on the opposite side of World's End Road. However, the side of the road that the appeal site is located is dominated by fields. The appeal site and adjoining land are free of built form and there are open views through the site from the road. In these respects, the appeal site is distinctly part of a prevailing open and agrarian character away from the settlement boundary.

10. Given the appeal site's position set away from the nearest residential boundaries, the residential development would be visually distinct from the consolidated built form of the village. I acknowledge that the matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent approval. Even so, a dwelling in this location together with any associated access drive and domestic landscaping would be at odds with the immediate undeveloped and open surroundings to this side of World's End Road. Consequently, the proposal would be likely to unacceptably erode the rurality of the land away from the settlement boundary.

11. Having regard to the sustainable development considerations under Policy 2 (Development Management), my finding in respect of the effects on the character and appearance of the area further indicates that there would not be

environmental benefits that meet the sustainable development needs of the area.

12. I conclude, the appeal site is not a suitable location for the proposal and this includes the effects on the character and appearance of the area which would be significantly harmful. In these respects, the proposal would conflict with the strategic, sustainability and character and appearance requirements of Policies 1 (Spatial Strategy) and 2 (Development Management) of the LP. It would also conflict with the Framework which endorses plan-led development and requires that proposals contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Other Matters

13. The allocation of land for housing which would extend the village envelope relates to the Council's obligations to plan for the provision of housing over the plan period and is subject to an examination process. This is not the same as an individual proposal for a piecemeal development in the countryside.

14. On my site visit I noted 2 dwellings further to the south on the same side of World's End Road to the appeal site. However, these appeared to be well established, and do not justify sporadic development having regard to the current spatial strategy and the prevailing open and rural characteristics to this side of the road. The recent development of 6 dwellings on World's End Road, to the northwest of the appeal site, shares a boundary with other residential properties in Tydd St Mary and from the evidence before me was previously occupied by buildings. It is also shown to be within the settlement boundary in the LP. In these respects that development is also not comparable to the appeal site.

15. I have seen that outline planning permission for a dwelling was granted at the site in 1990[1]. However, I understand that particular permission has since lapsed. Furthermore, I am not aware of the material considerations including the planning policy requirements that were relevant at that time. Accordingly, I have considered the appeal proposal on the basis of the proposal before me and the current requirements of the development plan and national policy.

16. The appellant contends that small sites such as the appeal site enable the individual who has no desire to live on housing estates to design and build their ideal home. However, a personal desire to live in the countryside is not justification for development which would conflict with the sustainable objectives of the development plan and the Framework.

17. Given that the site is not isolated, the exceptions at Paragraph 84 (previously paragraph 80) of the Framework do not apply. Even if they did, there is no objective evidence to suggest the reserved matters would be capable of meeting the very high bar of design that is of exceptional quality that is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, raising the standard of design more generally in rural area and significantly enhancing the immediate setting.

18. I acknowledge that the proposal would be designed by an individual. However, there is nothing before me to suggest that the proposal would meet any unmet

[1] LPA Ref H21-0046-89

need on the Council's self and custom housebuilding register, nor that any such need could not be met through the spatial strategy. Furthermore, there is no mechanism before me by which to secure the plot for development which meets the provisions within the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015).

Conclusion

19. The proposal does not accord with the strategic, sustainability and character and appearance requirements of the development plan. The other material considerations that have been advanced do not justify a decision other than in accordance with the development plan, which, in terms of my conclusion under the main issue, the appeal scheme would clearly conflict.

20. Therefore, for the reasons set out, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

M Russell

INSPECTOR