



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 August 2020

by David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N2535/W/20/3253109

Land to the North West of Rectory Farm, Stow Road, Sturton by Stow, Lincoln LN1 2BZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Graham Smith against the decision of West Lindsey District Council.
 - The application Ref 140778, dated 10 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is outline planning application for single residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application has been submitted in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration. I have dealt with the appeal on that basis, treating the proposed site plan as being indicative.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would represent an appropriate location for a dwelling, having regard to local and national policy.

Reasons

4. Sturton by Stow is identified as a Medium Village by Policy LP2 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2017 (the Local Plan). Policy LP4 of the Local Plan also identifies a growth level for the village of 15%, and the Council accepts that the village can support 7 new dwellings before meeting this growth level.
5. The Local Plan also takes a sequential approach where priority is given to the development of brownfield sites in the developed footprint of the settlement, followed by brownfield sites at the edge of the settlement, before consideration is given to green field sites. The appellant has applied this sequential test and has not been able to identify sequentially preferable brownfield sites within the village. The Council has provided no substantive evidence to contradict this.
6. However, the Local Plan also sets out that growth in villages should be in 'appropriate locations', based on the retention of the core shape and form of the settlement as well as not leading to significant harm to the character and

appearance of the surrounding countryside or the rural setting of the settlement, amongst other things.

7. Sturton by Stow has an elongated character with the main body of the village located to the south east of the appeal site near to the A1500. The appeal site is part of an area of paddock land adjacent to Rectory Farm. The farm buildings are of an agricultural character and the area in the vicinity of the appeal site on this side of Stow Road is characterised by sporadic development within the countryside, as opposed to the built up area on the opposite side of the road. Stow Road in the vicinity of the appeal site represents a clearly defined boundary to the edge of the built extent of the village. Within this context, the appeal site is clearly part of the rural setting of the village rather than being part of the built form of the settlement. Although there is built development elsewhere to the west of Stow Road, this is located some distance from the appeal site and does not set a visual context for the proposal.
8. A substantial degree of screening is provided by dense conifer planting along the boundary with Stow Road and it is proposed to retain this. However, even with the planting in place I consider that the proposed development would be visible in views enabled by the site entrance. Whilst such views may be fleeting and some screening would be provided by the farm buildings, the introduction of built development into the countryside and associated residential activity would be apparent. Furthermore, the screening effect of the planting may be compromised as a result of trimming to achieve the required visibility splay, even if none of the individual trees would be removed. The projection of built development onto the paddock would also be readily apparent from Rectory Farm.
9. The proposal would result in the encroachment of built development into what is an open paddock beyond the built-up extent of the village. Whilst it would be largely screened in views from Stow Road, the proposal would nevertheless constitute an erosion of the rural landscape surrounding the village.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would lead to significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and the rural setting of the settlement. The projection of built development into the countryside beyond the boundary established by this extent of Stow Road would also harm the core shape and form of the settlement.
11. With regards to the consideration of the core shape and form of the settlement, the appellant contends that this should relate to the settlement as a whole, and not a particular part. However, the shape and form of a settlement is essentially the sum of its constituent parts, and significant harm to part of a settlement or its setting can therefore result in harm to its shape and form.
12. Reference has been made to the more restrictive consideration of the development footprint of settlements defined as Hamlets in the Local Plan. However, I consider that the approach to Medium Villages such as Sturton by Stow is an appropriately flexible response to the sustainable growth of settlements larger than hamlets, including those with suitable key facilities.
13. The Council submits that the proposal would set a precedent for further residential development in an area which positively contributes to the setting of the village. I consider that this is not a generalised fear of precedent, but a realistic and specific concern as I saw that there was an adjacent plot of land

which presents similar circumstances to the appeal proposal. Whilst I am mindful that each planning application should be determined on its individual merits, allowing this appeal would make it more difficult to resist further planning applications for similar developments and I consider that the cumulative effect would exacerbate the harm I have described above.

14. I have had regard to the benefits arising from the proposal. The dwelling would provide good access to services within the village, although this can be said of many sites on the edge of this settlement. The proposal would contribute to the supply of housing in the area, including towards the identified growth level for the village. However, it has not been demonstrated that there are no green field sites in appropriate locations which could also contribute to this. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the Council has a deliverable supply of housing in excess of 5 years, and on that basis there is no overriding need to allow development in inappropriate locations such as the appeal site.
15. I conclude that the proposal would not retain the core shape and form of the settlement and would significantly harm the character and appearance of the countryside and the rural setting of the settlement. As such, the proposal would not represent an appropriate location for a dwelling contrary to Policies LP2 and LP4 of the Local Plan. The proposal would also conflict with Policies LP17 and LP26 of the Local Plan due to the harm to the setting of the settlement as well as the character and local distinctiveness of the area. The proposal would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework with regards to achieving sustainable development and well-designed places.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR