
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2017

by Richard Aston BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 30th March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/16/3164294

Site R/O 160 Histon Road, Cottenham, Cambridgeshire CB24 8UG

- 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 and Mrs B Newitt against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/2037/16/OL, dated 20 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of a dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application was submitted in outline form and makes it clear that all matters are reserved for future consideration apart from 'Access'. Although the proposed block and location plan is not marked as 'indicative' or 'illustrative', because all matters apart from 'Access' are reserved for future consideration I have dealt with the appeal on the basis that the plan is indicative.

Preliminary Matter

3. There is no dispute that the proposal lies within the Green Belt and would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt, as defined in development plan policy¹ and the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'). Furthermore, that the harm by reason of inappropriateness should be given substantial weight. I concur with that position.

Main Issues

4. Given the above, the main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
 - Whether the harm, by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so would this amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

¹ Policy GB/1 South Cambridgeshire District Council Development Control Policies DPD 2007.

Reasons

Effect on openness

5. Openness has both spatial and visual aspects and in this case apart from a hardstanding, small shed, associated poultry run and timber fencing, the site is free from any significant built form. In combination with part of its appearance as a small orchard set amongst mature trees and landscaping, this provides a sense of spaciousness and openness that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the appeal site and its rural surroundings. Consequently, the introduction of a family sized home and garaging would undoubtedly have a greater impact on openness, both in spatial and visual terms. This would cause significant harm to the openness of this part of the Green Belt and would conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. In accordance with paragraph 88 of the Framework, I attach substantial weight to the harm to openness.

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site lies to the rear of No. 160 Histon Road, a two storey detached dwelling on the periphery of the approach into the village of Cottenham. It is accessed via a driveway to the side of No. 160 and forms part of a long and narrow rectangular shaped plot that is bordered to the rear and side by a mature hedgerow separating it from open agricultural fields, to which it has a strong affinity.
7. Whilst there are examples of residential development extending back from Histon Road, the prevailing character of development closer to the appeal site is formed by a variety of residential dwellings sited on long and narrow plots set out in a linear pattern back from the road behind in/out driveways and soft landscaping. A number of glasshouses exist to the rear of one of the neighbouring properties but such development was not overly conspicuous. Apart from what appeared to be ancillary outbuildings in rear gardens, significant backland development was not evident or a prevailing characteristic of the area.
8. The proposal would result in a considerable presence of residential development, bringing a much harder edge to the appeal site. It would also be viewed as being well beyond the established pattern of residential development and this would be particularly evident when viewed from Histon Road, the rear gardens of properties along it and from the open countryside surrounding the site. Although in outline form, the erection of what is likely to be a substantial detached dwelling and garage² would represent an uncharacteristic intrusion of built form and degree of suburbanisation of the appeal site that would be at odds with the spacious and open quality of it and its rural surroundings, to the detriment of its character and appearance.
9. The site is already bordered by a mature hedge and contains a number of trees. Consequently, there would be very limited opportunities for additional landscaping and I do not consider that existing or future landscaping would mitigate this harm, mindful that any additional landscaping would also take a substantial amount of time to mature.

² Indicated as being 4+ bedrooms on the application form.

10. For these reasons the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies DP/2 and DP/3 (2) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007 ('DPD') which, require all new development to be of a high quality design that preserves or enhances the character of the local area, respects local distinctiveness and resists the grant of planning permission where development would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the countryside.

Other considerations

11. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. Whilst I am mindful of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance which states that, '*Unmet housing need is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt*' (ref ID 3-034-2014006), nevertheless, a single dwelling would provide a very minor contribution to the supply of housing.
12. The proximity of the site to local services and facilities within the village also weighs in support of the proposal and there would be some economic benefits associated with it, including the support future occupiers would give to local businesses and services and economic activity during construction. However, given the proposal relates to a single dwelling, to my mind such social and economic benefits only carry minimal weight.

Planning balance and conclusion

13. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It goes on to advise that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
14. The other considerations put forward do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight that I give to the harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness, the significant harm to openness and the harm that I have identified in terms of character and appearance. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
15. Paragraph 49 of the Framework states that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. Policy GB/1 of the DPD simply states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development as defined in Planning Practice Guidance 2: Green Belts. Although this has since been superseded by the Framework it has, in combination with other policies, the effect of restricting the locations where housing may be developed and as a result, it affects and constrains the supply of housing land. Consequently, as the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing land it should be regarded as a relevant policy for the supply of housing in this particular case. However, the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and because it is broadly consistent with the approach set out in the Framework I still attach significant weight to it.

16. Although I have found conflict with other policies of the DPD, in circumstances where relevant policies are out-of-date, paragraph 14 of the Framework indicates that permission should be granted, unless there are specific policies in the Framework (such as land designated as Green Belt), which indicate that development should be restricted. Given that there are no very special circumstances, Green Belt policy provides that to be the case here. The proposal would not therefore be the sustainable development, for which the Framework indicates a presumption in favour.
17. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole and the Framework. Material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan and having considered all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard Aston

INSPECTOR