



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 10 February 2021

by Joanna Gilbert MA (Hons) MTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/20/3256984

74 Owl End, Great Stukeley PE28 4AQ.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Ryan and Dr Lasman against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02611/FUL, dated 23 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 26 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of detached dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development is in a suitable location for housing having regard to the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. One of the main roads within Great Stukeley, Owl End consists predominantly of large, detached two-storey houses of different architectural styles. The pattern of development changes as the road continues northwards into the countryside, with housing and farm buildings becoming more dispersed.
4. The site lies east of a small group of buildings at 31, 74 and 76 Owl End. Although they lie on different sides of Owl End, together with housing fronting Chestnut Grove and Stukeley Park Road, these houses form the northernmost part of the main cluster of housing along Owl End. North of the site, a large paddock forms a gap between the site, the road and a smaller cluster of farm buildings and houses with their gardens and outbuildings. The paddock, like the site itself, slopes gently upwards from west to east.
5. Situated east of the house at 76 Owl End, the site is mainly grassed with three timber sheds, vegetable beds and a number of trees. The site's northern, eastern and western boundaries consist of post and rail fencing. Large trees also screen the site from No 76's rear garden. There is hedging along the eastern boundary. The open countryside lies beyond the site's eastern boundary. To the south and south west, there are the rear garden of 74 Owl End, the house and garage at No 74, and the vehicular access to the site which runs between the garage at No 74 and the house at No 76.
6. Policy LP2 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019) (HLP) sets out the development strategy. Approximately 75% of housing growth is to be at four strategic locations, with the remainder dispersed across key service

centres and small settlements. HLP Policy LP9 deals with development in and around small settlements. Great Stukeley is classified as a small settlement. The policy outlines that development on land within the small settlement's built-up area will be supported where it is sustainable in terms of infrastructure and access to services and facilities, and its effect on the character of the immediate locality and settlement. Additionally, development on land well related to the built-up area of a small settlement may be supported where it accords with the specific opportunities allowed for through other HLP policies. The HLP defines built-up areas in paragraphs 4.80 – 4.85 and provides guidance in the table below paragraph 4.85.

7. The site has a natural and rural character with vegetable beds, trees, and grassed areas as well as a number of sheds. It does not, to my mind, form a formal garden. Furthermore, it does not relate particularly strongly either physically or visually to the houses at Nos 74 or 76 as it is situated at an angle away from No 74 and is partially screened from view by occupiers of Nos 74 and 76 by trees. While it would be seen with other housing from the field to the east and the buildings at Stukeley Park are visible in layered views from within the site, it is directly surrounded by built development on less than two sides.
8. Although there is a hedge separating the site and the field, the site relates well visually, physically and functionally to the field and the paddock. Given its nature and location, the site performs the role of a visual buffer between the Owl End houses and the countryside. As such, the site would not constitute an individual plot which would allow for an infill and rounding off opportunity on land physically, functionally and visually related to existing buildings. Despite the site's proximity to services, facilities and transport infrastructure and the permissions and policy context of the nearby former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm, HLP Policy LP9 is not applicable here. Rather than forming part of or relating well to the built-up area, the site forms part of Great Stukeley's countryside setting and HLP Policy LP10 would apply.
9. HLP Policy LP10 states, amongst other things, that development within the countryside will be restricted to limited, specific opportunities in other HLP policies. No such specific opportunities have been identified. Furthermore, the policy confirms that development must recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. This is consistent with paragraph 170 b) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
10. As evidenced by the appellant's character appraisal and as observed on site, most houses along the southern part of Owl End are large two-storey properties which front the road. Large garages and pitched roofs are common, though there are also gabled, hipped, flat and mansard roofs. Beyond the general size, form, and siting of buildings within their plots, there is little uniformity of design or a single local vernacular. Buildings use a simple palette of materials, including brick, render, tiles, and timber.
11. Set within a slight dip in the site, the proposed development would be contemporary in design, inspired by agricultural barns. Its size, shape and form are similar to its two-storey pitched roofed neighbours. The choice of materials stems from their energy efficiency and sustainability features. Though only likely to be glimpsed from the road, the external staircase and terrace would represent a discordant feature. Moreover, in terms of siting and orientation, the proposed development would be located at the rear of an existing residential

plot, without a road frontage and projecting towards the adjacent field. This would be incongruous, introducing a large house into land that is essentially rural in character. As such, I find that the proposed development would not integrate positively with its context and would encroach into the countryside.

12. The proposed development's siting results from the need for privacy for future residents and residents of No 74; limiting views of the house from Owl End; and making the most effective use of passive solar design. Additionally, it would adhere to accessible and adaptable homes and water efficiency requirements. Furthermore, I note references to paragraphs 7 – 11, 59 and 77 of the Framework regarding sustainable development, delivering a sufficient supply of homes, and providing rural housing. If the proposed development were delivered, it would free up a large family-sized house to the market. However, these matters do not outweigh my concerns.
13. In conclusion, the proposed development is not in a suitable location for housing having regard to the character and appearance of the area. This would conflict with the requirements of HLP Policies LP2, LP10, LP11 and LP12, Chapter 12 and paragraph 170 b) of the Framework, the National Design Guide and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2017. HLP Policies LP2 and LP10 are summarised above. HLP Policies LP11 and LP12, the National Design Guide and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD require, amongst other things, development to respond positively to its context and identity. Chapter 12 of the Framework addresses the need to achieve well-designed places.

Other Matters

14. The appellant has provided a signed legal agreement in the form of a unilateral undertaking to provide for wheeled bins. As the appeal is to be dismissed on other substantive issues, it is not necessary for me to address this in detail.
15. While there are differences between the main parties regarding the site's planning status, I am required to deal with the appeal before me. With regard to self-build, I have not applied HLP Policy LP25 as it did not form part of the Council's reasons for refusal and I have only limited evidence that it would constitute self-build. Even if I had applied HLP Policy LP25, it would not have overcome the harm identified.
16. The parish council and a number of local residents support the proposed development. Although planning permissions on sites on Ermine Street and Green End have been mentioned, the details of these permissions have not been provided to me. Given my overall findings, I have not addressed objections made by local residents further.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Joanna Gilbert

INSPECTOR