
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 February 2021

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/20/3262971

16 The Rye, Eaton Bray LU6 2BQ

- 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 M & A Knightsbridge Properties Ltd against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/20/01802/FULL, dated 2 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is construction of 2x residential dwellings and all ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council has submitted its emerging Local Plan for examination. As there is no timescale in place for its adoptions, its policies only attract limited weight in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the revised National Planning Policy Framework,
 - The effect on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - Would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) directs that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, save for specific exceptions. Paragraph 145(e) of the Framework identifies one of those exceptions as limited infilling in villages.
5. While the site lies outside of the defined settlement boundary of Eaton Bray, the neighbouring sites fronting The Rye are on the approach to the centre of

the village on a stretch of road with a 30mph speed limit. That linear pattern of development extends for some distance further along The Rye, and the properties on the Wheatlands development lie beyond the site. For the purposes of this decision I am therefore satisfied that the appeal site falls within the village envelope.

6. The Framework does not contain a definition of what amounts to limited infilling, and therefore it is a matter of planning judgment whether development can be considered as such.
7. With regards to whether the scale of development would be limited, the site comprises a substantial area of land to either side of the access drive approaching Wheatlands. The site opens in one corner to open fields, and it forms a significant break between the properties fronting The Rye and the Wheatlands site.
8. As to whether the development would amount to infilling, as a matter of planning judgment I consider that an infill site is one lying between existing development, the development of which would continue an established pattern of development. In this case, the appeal proposal would result in the consolidation of an extensive and uninterrupted rearward projection of successive residential from The Rye that is not characteristic of the overall pattern of development on this side of the road.
9. Given the size of the site and uncharacteristic pattern of development, the appeal proposal does not amount to limited infilling in the village. It would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to the objectives of the Framework.

Character and appearance

10. The site contributes to the character of the area by keeping Green Belt land open, in accordance with national policy. Its development for housing would result in the loss of that open character, which is visible from the surrounding properties.
11. While the two proposed houses would be similar in scale to the neighbouring Wheatlands properties, and the development would not be prominent in views from public land, it would nevertheless have a harmful urbanising effect on this open and largely undeveloped site.
12. The appeal proposal would therefore be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with the requirements of Policy BE8 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan 2004, the requirements of which include that development should complement and harmonise with the local surroundings.

Other considerations

13. The appellants have identified matters considered to weigh in favour of the appeal proposal. It would deliver temporary economic benefits through the provision of jobs and purchasing during the construction period, and ongoing local benefits through the support for local businesses and services. The development would deliver two additional houses, supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The houses would be built to a high quality including the implementation of energy efficiency

measures. The site would be well landscaped. The site is close to a major service centre, Leighton Buzzard.

14. My attention has been drawn to a proposed site allocation in the settlement of Everton in the Council's emerging Local Plan. The identified site lies to the rear of houses fronting Potton Road, but has a lengthy site frontage onto Green Lane, and there appears to be a pattern of similar development on The Lawns and St Mary's Walk in the near vicinity. In any case, the emerging Plan has not been adopted, and there is no indication that the site allocation will be found acceptable. This therefore attracts very limited weight in the determination of this appeal.
15. The Framework states that substantial weight must be given to any harm to the Green Belt. The identified benefits and other considerations are acknowledged but can only be accorded limited weight given the scale of the development. They do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and the harm to the character and appearance of the area that would result from the development. Accordingly, very special circumstances do not exist in this instance.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, the appeal fails.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR