



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2022

By A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/22/3298291

Land adjacent to the northwest of 43 Mill Road, Great Gransden SG19 3AG

- 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 Nigel Day against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: 21/016293/FUL dated 22 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 12 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single, 4 bedroom dwelling with attendant access and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue:

2. The main issues are whether the proposed development is appropriately located having regard to:
 - the effect upon the character and appearance of the area, including the impact upon trees, and
 - the use of agricultural land, and
 - road safety.

Reasons:

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a large parcel of pastureland fronting Mill Road located to the south-east of the village of Great Gransden (the village). The appeal site enclosed by mature vegetation and belts of trees on three sides including at the boundaries with Nos. 43 and 27 Mill Road which adjoin the south-east and north-west edges of the appeal site respectively. However, although screened along its Mill Road frontage, the site is open and visually contiguous with pastureland to the north-east and the expansive and generally open rolling countryside beyond.
4. Policy LP10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP) sets out the circumstances where development in the countryside would be supported. The appellant seeks to argue, in contrast to the Council position, that the proposal would form part of the built-up area of the village as an infill opportunity. However, the guidance set out in section 4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP) at 4.85 specifically excludes

'isolated propertieswhich are physically and visually detached from the main built form' from the meaning of built-up area. No.43 Mill Road, albeit a large property with a number of ancillary buildings and extensive grounds, is visually and physically detached from the main built area of Great Gransden, standing apart and within the agricultural land that surrounds the settlement and not as part of it.

5. Consequently, I consider the appellant's proposition that the appeal site comprises an individual infill plot is not supported by the relevant policies in the HLP nor am I persuaded that a change to residential use of a half-hectare of agricultural land would be 'minor scale' and a 'rounding-off opportunity' which is 'well related to existing buildings'. The proposal would intrude upon the open and undeveloped landscape surrounding the settlement linking the built area of Great Gransden with an isolated dwelling (No.47). The result would be a significant and potentially prominent extension of domestic land use into surrounding agricultural land that would also risk harm to the identity, character and appearance of Great and Little Gransden as distinct settlements.
6. The Council's third refusal reason relates to the absence of a 'layout specific arborecultural assessment'. The appellant has provided a Preliminary Arborecultural Impact Assessment, which concludes that the *'only likely arborecultural impact is the removal of some trees to form an access from the highway and this impact is likely to be minimal'*. My observations concur with that conclusion. Although the report is not definitive in the terms set out in Policy LP31, the scope for harmful impact is self-evidently small given the scale of site and the nature of the works proposed. Consequently any potential impacts could be addressed by conditions in terms of construction methods and details, landscaping scheme and protection. As such conditions would likely mitigate arborecultural impact, there would be no conflict with Policy LP31 which requires such impacts to be assessed and the resulting access formation and tree works would not cause significant change to the character and appearance of the area.
7. Overall, however, the proposal would have a number of negative impacts upon the character and appearance of the area as I have identified. Notwithstanding the absence of significant impact upon trees, I conclude that the proposal fails to accord with the objectives for development in the countryside set out in Policy LP10 of the HLP in terms of the requirement for residential proposals to protect the intrinsic beauty of the countryside.

Agricultural land

8. The proposal arranges a single storey dwelling of linear design in proximity to the site boundary with No.43 leaving the greater, western, portion of the large appeal site as amenity, or garden, land which would, in consequence be permanently lost to agricultural use.
9. It is not disputed that the appeal site is comprised within the definition of best and most versatile agricultural land as Grade 2. The objectives of policy LP10 of the HLP are essentially protective of rural character and landscape whilst attending to the development needs of the rural economy with a specific objective of avoiding the loss of such land. Overall I am not persuaded that the delivery of a single dwelling, regardless of design quality,

would outweigh the conflict with policy LP10 as to a half-hectare of the best and most versatile agricultural land being lost to residential use.

Highway safety

10. Policy LP17 of the HLP sets out general requirement for a number of matters relating to vehicular movement including provision of parking (sufficiency of which is not in dispute) and highway safety. The Council's fourth refusal reason is based on inadequate information as to visibility, however the appellant has provided additional information on this count in the form of a detailed Transport Statement which indicates more than adequate visibility would be available to emerging vehicles, a conclusion with which my observations agree. I therefore find no conflict with Policy LP17 of the HLP with regard to highway safety.

Other Matters:

11. Although not a refusal reason, the existence of a Listed Post Mill on Mill Road engages the duty set out in Section 66 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving such building(s) or (its) setting or any features of special interest. My observations direct that the proposal site would not form part of the setting of the post mill, nor are the site and mill intervisible due to distance, land form and intervening vegetation. Therefore the proposal would cause no harm to the significance of that heritage asset.

Conclusion:

12. Notwithstanding the lack of conflict with Policy LP17, that does not outweigh my conclusions as to the other main issues as to the impact of the proposal on character and appearance and use of agricultural land. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not accord with the provisions of the development plan taken as a whole and in consequence, for the reasons given and taking all matters raised into account, the appeal cannot succeed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR