
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 December 2024

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 30th December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/24/3346199

Land adjacent to 21 Ermine Street, Little Stukeley, Huntingdon PE28 4BE

- 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 S Dockerill against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01562/OUT, dated 18 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 22 December 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application is in outline with all matters reserved except access. An indicative plan proposes a square shaped footprint for the building in line with the dwellings to the northwest. The appeal has been considered on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal should be permitted having regard to the spatial strategy for the area and the effect on its character and appearance.
4. Two further reasons for refusal, relating to access arrangements and waste collection, are dealt with under other matters.

Reasons

5. The proposal is for a single self-build detached dwelling on the southwest side of Ermine Street on the outskirts of Little Stukeley. The site, screened by a frontage hedge, forms the front section of a larger field, with the remains of some agricultural buildings and a former stable block to the rear. The dwelling would utilise the existing field access.
6. Little Stukeley is classified as a 'small settlement' by paragraph 4.100 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2026¹ (the HLP) where Policy LP9 makes clear proposals within the built-up area will be supported subject to certain criteria. In addition, on land 'well related' to the built-up area, a proposal may be supported where it accords with the specific opportunities allowed for through

¹ Adopted in May 2019

other policies of the plan. These policies are listed in paragraph 4.107 with the most relevant being Policy LP28 dealing with rural exceptions housing.

7. The criteria for defining the built-up area are provided in HLP paragraphs 4.80 to 4.85 and the table that follows. The built-up area for each settlement does not need to be a single continuous area as there may be distinct areas of development within a single parish. However, to be considered a built-up area there must be a distinct group of 30 dwellings or more; clusters smaller than this are deemed to comprise isolated or sporadic development within the countryside. In the case of Little Stukeley the built-up area boundary has been defined by Policy 1 and Map 3b of the Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan 2023 (the NP) as comprising Mill Road/Low Road to the south and Church Way/Pringle Way & Court to the north of Ermine Street.
8. The appeal site lies at one end of a group of about five detached dwellings fronting onto Ermine Street with Alconbury Baptist Church set behind some distance away from the defined built-up area boundary. Whilst a large area of housing forming part of RAF Alconbury lies on the other side of the road, this is surrounded by tall, barbed wire security fencing and forms a separate enclave of functionally unrelated development. The group falls well short of the 30 dwelling figure to constitute an independent built-up area, instead forming an area of ribbon development which is physically and visually detached from the main built form of the village and thus properly excluded in accordance with the table following HLP paragraph 4.85.
9. Other than the Beacon Centre in its substantial verdant grounds, there is an undeveloped gap about 200m wide between the group of buildings and the defined built-up area of the village, so contrary to the views of the appellant the appeal site is not 'well related' to the built-up area either. The site does not form part of the protected settlement breaks defined by Policy 8 and Map 9a/b of the NP but these serve the limited function of preventing coalescence between Little Stukeley and Great Stukeley, RAF Alconbury and Alconbury Weald and does not imply support for development elsewhere.
10. Lying neither within the built-up area of the village nor well related to it, the proposal conflicts with HLP Policy LP 9 and NP Policy 1. The site should be treated as countryside for planning policy purposes where Policy LP10 applies and rural exceptions housing may be considered under Policy LP28.
11. Self-build housing is supported in principle by national planning policy and HLP Policy LP25 as part of the housing mix. The site is owned by the appellant who wishes to build such a home and is on the Council's custom and self-build housebuilding register. However, the Council states that it is meeting the level of demand being registered by implementing its existing policies which include securing serviced plots on suitable housing developments. This is not disputed by the appellant. The availability and/or demand for plots in rural areas is not provided by either main party, but if justified these could be provided as part of rural exception sites that are primarily aimed at delivering affordable housing under Policy LP28. There is no requirement to deliver custom and self-build plots in particular individual settlements.
12. The appeal site is currently a section of an undeveloped field forming part of the unspoilt countryside to the southwest of Ermine Street. Whilst bounded to the southeast by a hedgerow, the site is not defined on the ground on its southwestern boundary and is large enough to accommodate a substantial

sized dwelling. Whatever its size, the new dwelling with its associated parked cars and domestic garden would be readily apparent to passers-by, extending and consolidating the existing line of ribbon development along the road. The result would inevitably be a further encroachment of built development into the countryside and material harm to the character and appearance of the area.

13. For these reasons the proposal would conflict with the spatial strategy for the area and would be unduly harmful to its character and appearance. The proposal conflicts with HLP Policies LP2, LP9 and LP10(b) which resist proposals outside and poorly related to the built-up area of Little Stukeley and those which would harm the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The proposal also conflicts with NP Policy 1 which defines the built-up area in order to protect the landscape setting of the village (NP paragraph 19.4). As a single self-build dwelling, the proposal does not fall within the scope of HLP Policy LP28 for rural exception sites.
14. The loss of agricultural land would be minimal so there is no significant conflict with HLP Policy LP10(a) and if the dwelling were to be agreed in principle there is no reason why a detailed design could not satisfy the requirements of HLP Policies LP11 and LP12.

Other matters

15. The application was also refused on the basis that the plans of the necessary visibility splays were insufficiently detailed. The appellant submitted further plans with the appeal and in the absence of any response from the Council that they are unsatisfactory this could be assumed and the matter dealt with by condition. The access details could provide for resumed agricultural use if this is intended. The frontage footway could also be secured by condition. Finally, the application was refused on the grounds that no unilateral undertaking was submitted to provide the funds for wheeled waste collection bins. Again, an undertaking was submitted with the appeal and the Council has not said it is unsatisfactory.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would provide an additional self-build family dwelling which would have economic and social benefits for the area and help meet housing need. However, these benefits are outweighed by the lack of compliance with the spatial strategy for the area together with the harm that would result to its character and appearance and the associated conflict with the development plan.
17. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR