



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 December 2024

by **B Astley-Serougi BA(Hons) LLM MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/24/3344269

Westfield Farm, Great North Road, Buckden, Cambridgeshire PE19 5XJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Darren Coote against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02476/PIP.
 - The development proposed is residential redevelopment with 3-5 dwellings following demolition of existing buildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for residential development comprising a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 dwellings following demolition of existing buildings at Westfield Farm, Great North Road, Buckden, Cambridgeshire, PE19 5XJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/02476/PIP dated 19 December 2023.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Darren Coote against Huntingdonshire District Council. This application is subject to a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and the second ("technical details consent") stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
4. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
5. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024. The parties have been provided with the opportunity to comment on the implications of the revisions to their cases. I have taken account of the revised Framework, and any comments made, in my determination of the appeal as necessary.

¹ PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

6. The description of development in the banner heading has been taken from the description of development in the application form which has also been used in the decision notice. The permission in principle procedure requires the minimum and maximum number of dwellings to be specified. I have included the words minimum and maximum numbers in my formal decision. Multiple site layouts have been submitted and I have treated these as illustrative only.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

8. The appeal site is located in a Key Service Centre as defined in Policy LP2 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (HLP). Policy LP8 of the HLP establishes support for development additional to those allocated in the HLP where it is located within the built-up area of a Key Service Centre or on land well-related to the built up area where it accords with specific opportunities allowed through other policies of the HLP.
9. A built-up area is defined in paragraph 4.84 of the HLP as a distinct group of buildings that includes 30 or more homes. Additionally, land which related more to the group of buildings rather than to the surrounding countryside is also considered to form part of the built-up area.
10. Westfield Farm is sited off the dual carriageway of the A1. It comprises of one residential dwelling and multiple agricultural buildings. There are large areas of hardstanding and grassed paddock in the appeal site, however adjacent to the appeal site on the opposing side of the A1 is a large residential housing estate. The northern and western boundaries of Westfield Farm are bounded by residential development and there is open land to the south of the appeal site. The residential dwelling to the north of Westfield Farm shares a boundary with an allotment site.
11. The Inspector in the 38 Hardwick Lane, Buckden appeal decision² refers to the A1 forming part of the infrastructure of Buckden. In that decision the intervisibility between the sites as well as an underpass for pedestrians to provide connections between the two sides of the dual carriageway is highlighted. Given the significant mature trees and hedgerows on the median strip as well as on the boundaries of the highway, there is a limited relationship between the opposing sides of the A1 in the appeal before me. However, the proximity of the village centre is a walkable distance and there is a dedicated pedestrian footpath from the site. Furthermore, there is a bus stop close the appeal site as well as an underpass which provides safe access to the facilities in Buckden. Therefore, it follows that the appeal site is at the least well-related to the built up area of Buckden as per the definition within the HLP.
12. Figure 28 of the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan 2021 shows Buckden's Landscape Character Zones. The appeal site is not within the village edge zone for the purposes of its character. This supports my findings that in functional and character terms given its proximity to the village centre and nearby footpaths and

² Planning Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/22/3295883

the bus stop, the appeal site is part of the built-up area of Buckden. Accordingly, it is a suitable location for the proposed development.

13. The appeal scheme would deliver residential dwellings. Consequently, given I have identified the location of the appeal site as part of the built-up area of a Key Service Centre and not being within the countryside for policy purposes, it follows that the use of the land for residential use would be appropriate.
14. The appeal site forms part of the land associated with Westfield Farm. The existing buildings are large and agricultural in character. Whilst the appeal site is close to open countryside, there are still a number of dwellings near to Westfield Farm. I note the Council's concern that five dwellings would erode a perceived transitional experience from the countryside to a small-settlement urban area. However, given the location of the appeal site in relation to the centre of the village as demonstrated in figure 28, as well as the large housing estate on the opposite side of the A1, the introduction of dwellings would not be an incongruous addition when assessed against the existing overall character of the surrounding area. Accordingly, the dwellings would not be viewed in isolation and would instead appear as part of the residential character of the village.
15. In conclusion, the proposed development would be suitable for residential development having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development. It would comply with Policies LP2 and LP8 of the HLP which establish support for development proposals within the built-up area of Key Service Centres.
16. Additionally, it would also comply with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the HLP in so far as they seek, amongst other things, to ensure development proposals successfully integrate with their surrounding landscapes and character of the area.
17. The Council had also referred to Policies LP 9 (Small Settlements), LP10 (the Countryside) and LP17 (Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement) in their reason for refusal and Policy LP33 (Rural Buildings) in their officer report. However, Policies LP10 and LP33 relate to development in the countryside and the conversion of buildings in the countryside. Given I have identified above that the appeal site is not located in the countryside and the scheme is not the conversion of a building neither of these policies are determinative for this appeal. I have identified that the appeal site is in a Key Service Centre and consequently Policy LP 9 is not determinative for this appeal. Neither is LP17 as highway matters are dealt with at Technical Details Consent stage in the permission in principle process.

Other Matters

18. Interested parties have raised concerns regarding a biodiversity net gain assessment, affordable housing provision as well as noise and air quality concerns. Additionally, there is limited evidence before me to suggest that the appeal scheme would result in an increase in demand on primary schools and doctor's surgeries. However, these are dealt with at Technical Details Consent stage and are not matters that are dealt with at this stage of the permission in principle process. Consequently, these matters are not determinative for this appeal.

Conclusion

19. The material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

B Astley-Serougi

INSPECTOR