



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 March 2025

by S Simms BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/W/24/3354303
2 Seventh Drove, Little Downham CB6 2EP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Taylor against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00738/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a replacement dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. Whether the proposal would be consistent with development plan policies relating to housing in rural areas, with regard to the protection of the countryside.

Reasons

3. The site contains a modest two-storey detached house with pebbledash walls and hipped dual pitch roof. An unassuming building, muted and with simple symmetry, it sits comfortably within the landscape. I observed on site that it was unoccupied, and its main doors and windows had been removed. Other than a post-and-wire fence, there was little to distinguish the land adjoining it from surrounding fields.
4. The site is on a characteristically straight Fenland drove road. Apart from a small bungalow and agricultural sheds, there are no other buildings alongside the road, and it ends in fields a little further to the north-east. Fishing lake lodges to the south, whilst accessed from the road, are set some way back behind a tree line. The landscape is flat and sparse, with views of adjoining droves in the distance.
5. The proposed house would be in brick, about 1.5 metres taller than the existing and more than double its footprint. Photographic evidence shows that its materials and detailing would reflect two-storey farmhouses within the wider area. However, I have no further details of the applications in the examples, so cannot be sure of the differences between them and dwellings they replaced. On my site visit, I found none with glazed gables and saw that most dwellings near the site are bungalows.
6. The scale of the glazed gable, a reference to openings in barns, may befit buildings of such functional materials and scale within the landscape. However, as proposed, it would be out of keeping and emphasise verticality, at odds with the nearest other dwellings and the flat landscape setting. Whilst I recognise the need to raise floor

levels and achieve modern ceiling heights, the significant increase in floor area combines with these to result in unacceptable height and massing.

7. As a result, the proposal would be visible from further away across the surrounding flat landscape than the existing. It would be remote from dwellings of similar scale and so not have regard to local context or relate sympathetically to the area and its landscape setting. Furthermore, whilst the proposed house would be within the fenced-off area, the area that would be laid out as garden would not. Consequently, its domestic character would encroach on that of the surrounding landscape, thus harming the intrinsic character of the countryside.
8. As the site is in the countryside, Policy GROWTH 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (ECLP) limits development to, amongst other categories, replacement dwellings. These must comply with ECLP Policy HOU 8, which requires proposals to be within the curtilage of the original, of a scale and design sensitive to setting, and of a height similar to the original, unless of exceptional design quality.
9. I have found that the proposal in total would not be within the original curtilage and aspects of its design would not be sensitive to its countryside setting. Hence, the proposal would not be consistent with development plan policies relating to housing in rural areas, with regard to the protection of the countryside. It would therefore be in conflict with ECLP Policies GROWTH 2 and HOU 8, but also Policies ENV 1 and ENV 2, which require proposals to protect their wider landscape setting, have regard to local context and relate sympathetically to the area.

Other Matters

10. Correspondence between the Council and appellant relating to the curtilage, which the appellant considers inconsistent with the decision, does not distinguish between the dwelling and the proposal as a whole. The policy applies to the whole and the proposed curtilage would extend beyond that which exists at present.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

11. The impacts to the character and appearance of the site and area represent harms contrary to the development plan as a whole, to which I attach significant weight.
12. I attach moderate weight to the appellant's desire to improve the standard of the dwelling for a growing family, to ensure it fits their needs now and in the future, and to their intentions to use sustainable materials, improve energy efficiency and achieve a net gain in biodiversity, as described in the Ecology Report.
13. Hence, these would not amount to material considerations that would indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
14. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Simms

INSPECTOR