



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 April 2025

by A Price BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/24/3354920

45A Wood End, Bluntisham, Cambridgeshire PE28 3LE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Vincent Haines against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00457/OUT.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'one new dwelling at the rear of 45A Wood End.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved. I have had regard to the submitted plans but have regarded all elements of these drawings as indicative.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is suitable for housing, having regard to the character and appearance of the area;
 - the effect of the proposed development on highway safety; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on protected species.

Reasons

Site and location

4. The appeal site comprises a relatively large parcel of open land positioned to the north of Wood End. It is associated with the residential property of 45A Wood End, with no dividing boundary treatments. While established residential development exists nearby, the area to the immediate north of the site is rural in character, made up predominantly of open fields.
5. Policy LP2 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (LP) seeks to ensure that new development is concentrated towards locations which provide services and facilities and, pertinent to the appeal, protects the character of existing settlements while recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside. This is in a similar vein to LP policy LP9 which relates directly to small

settlements and LP policy LP10 which relates to development in the countryside. LP policies LP11 and LP12 seek to ensure that development proposals respond positively to their context, including the natural environment.

6. Whilst I acknowledge that the appeal site currently forms part of the garden of No 45A, and irrespective of any formal designation, the site undoubtedly has a more rural than urban character. This positively contributes to the verdant and open landscape to the immediate north of the site. This is exemplified by the open and principally undeveloped nature of the appeal site, together with the mature hedges and trees that dominate the site's boundaries. These characteristics are in stark contrast with the more formal garden area to the immediate south of the site (most closely associated with No 45A) and the formal garden plots to the east, including at The Sycamores, which typically have clear site boundaries and a strong domestic character.
7. The proposed development would be at odds with this, introducing built form where this is not currently the case. Whilst the proposed dwelling would likely be of a similar scale to established properties within the surrounding area (for later approval), it would, when combined with the new access road and likely domestic paraphernalia, have a harmful urbanising effect on the site and surrounding countryside to the north.
8. I note the existence of established development within the surrounding area, some of which can be glimpsed from the appeal site between gaps in landscaping. My attention is also drawn to a previous appeal decision at Top Farm¹. Nevertheless, established properties within the surrounding area typically sit in garden plots arranged in a traditional manner relative to roads, which would not be the case here. The siting of the proposed development would not reflect the prevailing layout of the surrounding area and would be discordant with the established pattern and rhythm of development in this part of Bluntisham.
9. I note the appellant's argument that the site may have been used for parking previously. However, this does not alter my findings in respect of this main issue.
10. Overall, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, contrary to the relevant provisions of LP Policies LP2, LP9, LP10, LP11 and LP12. These policies, in summary and when taken together, seek to ensure that the character and appearance of the area, including the countryside, is not harmed and that developments make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of an area.

Highway safety

11. An existing driveway currently serves 45A Wood End. This leads from No 45A, between Nos 45 and 47 and out onto Wood End. Wood End lies within a built-up area with a speed limit of 30MPH. The indicative access to the proposed development is shown to be via this driveway, which would be extended into the appeal site.
12. The highways authority has raised concerns in respect of the intensification of the use of the existing access and that this would require, amongst other things, vehicular and pedestrian visibility splays at the junction with Wood End. The

¹ 1. Appeal Reference APP/H0520/W/23/3334460

appellant provided a technical note (TN) in response to this, produced by Sanderson Associates Consulting Engineers.

13. The submitted TN sets out the context to the site, which includes reference to several properties adjacent to Wood End having direct access onto the highway. Such arrangements, whether relating to individual properties or small groups of properties, are typical of this part of Bluntisham. Wider access points, together with visibility splays, are apparent at more contemporary and larger housing developments, such as at Meridian Close and The Fairway.
14. The TN concludes that the level of visibility for the proposed development, using the existing driveway arrangement, would be acceptable. Based on the evidence before me together with my observations on site, combined with the minor nature of the proposed development, I have no reason to disagree with those findings.
15. Overall, I conclude that the proposed development would be acceptable in respect of highway safety, in accordance with the relevant provisions of LP Policy LP17. This policy, in summary, seeks to ensure that proposals provide safe access. Nevertheless, the lack of identified harm in this respect is neutral in my consideration of the appeal proposal and does not alter my conclusion on the other main issues.

Protected species

16. The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) identifies that the site accommodates a mix of suitable and unsuitable terrestrial habitats for Great Crested Newts (GCNs) and that GCNs have the potential to be harmed as a result of the proposed development. The PEA concludes that further steps are required, which could either come in the form of further GCN surveys to inform a mitigation strategy or applying to join a District Level Licensing scheme.
17. A Natural England GCN District Level Licensing Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate has been submitted in support of the appeal. This has been counter signed by Natural England. Based on the evidence submitted, I am satisfied in respect of the proposed development's effect on GCNs and that the scheme would be in accordance with the relevant provisions of LP policy LP30 which seeks to ensure that development proposals demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated. Nevertheless, the lack of harm in this respect is neutral in my consideration of the appeal proposal and does not alter my conclusion on the other main issues.

Other Matters

18. I understand the frustration of the appellant who seeks to construct a single dwelling, referencing permissions and proposals for much larger developments in the area. However, as the appellant has acknowledged, each development proposal must be considered in the context of its own individual site circumstances and planning balance. That those developments are in the pipeline or have taken place, whatever their scale or location, is not reason for me to automatically allow development at the appeal site, particularly where harm has been identified.
19. I note that the proposed development would contribute one further home to housing supply in the area and that, once occupied, would contribute to the local

economy and community. However, these benefits would inevitably be limited by reason of the scale and nature of the proposed development. I also note the environmental ambitions of the appellant. Nevertheless, this benefit would not be wholly reliant on the scheme before me. The meeting of other planning policy requirements and any required mitigation would be neutral.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons above and having had regard to the development plan as a whole, and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Price

INSPECTOR