
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2025

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/25/3361000

Land adjacent 32 Shepreth Road, Barrington, Cambridgeshire CB22 7SB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Galpin against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 24/03591/PIP, dated 24 September 2024, was refused by notice dated 6 November 2024.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 No. Self-Build Dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. To determine the appeal the main issues are:
 - whether the location of the proposal would be acceptable having regard to the development plan and the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the benefits of a self-build dwelling on the site.
3. There is no dispute that, should other matters be acceptable, the site could accommodate a single dwelling.

Reasons

4. Should permission in principle be agreed, a S106 obligation would be necessary at the technical details stage to ensure the dwelling is first developed as a self-build dwelling. A condition would be unlikely to be enforceable.

Location

5. The proposal is for a single self-build dwelling on part of the extensive grounds of No 32 Barrington Road following those grounds subdivision. The site lies about 250 m west of the 'development framework' of Barrington defined by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (the SCLP) where Policy S/7 restricts development to that which needs a countryside location or is supported by other policies in the plan. SCLP Policy H/9 seeks to provide a wide mix of housing including self-build dwellings on large sites but does not in principle support such dwellings outside development frameworks. The proposal thus conflicts with Policy S/7 and its objective of protecting the countryside around the village from gradual encroachment by built development. The appellant

points out that some building has been accepted along Shepreth Road in recent years, but this does not in itself justify further expansion of the village beyond its boundaries. Development has primarily occurred or is planned on the other side of the road with an affordable housing scheme built (Primes Close) and four self-build dwellings allowed but not yet built immediately opposite the appeal site¹.

6. The site is within a reasonable 20-minute walk of the services and facilities in the village, and Shepreth railway station is under a mile away albeit via an unlit rural lane with no footways. The site would thus be relatively sustainable in terms of transport options for the prospective occupiers, but this would be the case for any site on the edge of the village.
7. Turning to the character and appearance of the area, in contrast to the more regimented built-up southern side of the road (existing and planned) the scattered dwellings to the north, particularly Nos 28-32, are set in spacious grounds and positioned well back behind tall roadside hedges/treebelts. The grounds of No 32, part of which would be severed to create the new plot, comprise an attractive area of old orchard with some trees of significance, particularly on the western and roadside boundaries, and potentially ecological value. The parties consider that the effect on these characteristics of the site are technical matters to be considered at the detailed stage, but in the absence of detailed arboricultural and ecological surveys the impact of a dwelling on these constraints is unknown and there is no guarantee that a single dwelling can be acceptably accommodated.
8. In any event, the new dwelling with its car parking/manoeuvring area would, certainly if the illustrative plan is followed through, involve a significant amount of tree and grassland clearance within the site. A new access would be created through the roadside hedge/treebelt inevitably involving some loss of trees and an opening up of the site compared to the existing low-key gap with its five bar gate. The new building, associated hard surfaces and parked cars together with any outbuildings, lawns and other domestic features, even with screening from the road, would adversely affect the existing attractive character and appearance of the site which is not currently in intensive residential garden use. Whilst the planned self-build dwellings opposite are likely to involve new accesses through a roadside hedge/treebelt, the land behind is a featureless pasture field with a very different character to the appeal site. Unlike the appeal site, that site also constitutes an undeveloped gap along the road frontage as it extends up to No 39, a prominent property adjacent to the bend in the road to the west.
9. For these reasons the location of the proposal would not be acceptable having regard to the development plan and the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would conflict with SCLP Policies S/7, HQ/1 and NH/2 which restrict new housing outside development frameworks, require development to preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and to respect local distinctiveness. The conflict with the other policies listed in the decision notice would not be significant.
10. Contrary to the claim of the appellant, SCLP Policy H/16 does not support the subdivision of residential gardens for new dwellings outside development frameworks, only replacement dwellings are permitted under Policy H/14.

¹ Self-build permissions 24/01901/PIP and 23/04447/PIP

Benefits

11. The conclusion above in relation to location must be balanced against the benefits of the proposal. The scheme would provide an additional dwelling which would have social and economic benefits for the village and contribute towards housing need. However, the Council claims it can demonstrate 5.5 years supply of deliverable housing sites, a figure not disputed by the appellant, and in these circumstances the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
12. The primary benefit put forward by the appellant is that of an additional self-build dwelling, a form of housing supported by both national and local policy. Indeed, the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 requires local authorities to keep a register of those seeking to acquire serviced plots in their area and to give enough permissions within three years of registration to meet the identified demand. As at October 2024 only 387 permissions had been granted to meet the needs of the 843 applicants registered by October 2021, an apparent shortfall of 456 dwellings². However, the number of applicants has declined consistently and rapidly over recent years from 189 in 2020/1 to just 32 in 2023/4. This indicates that demand is now falling and/or being met without use of the register. Although not how the legislation works, over the last two base periods November 2022 to October 2024 the needs of 114 new applicants have been more than met by issuing 151 new permissions.
13. The current legislative requirement for 456 more permissions thus arises from the 'backlog' of those registering during base periods 3 to 7, November 2017 to October 2022³. But there is no information to confirm that the applicants who registered during that period are still actively seeking plots, nor whether the permissions issued are actually taken up by self-builders from the register. Thus, in South Cambridgeshire, the difference between the cumulative number of applicants since April 2016 and the cumulative number of permissions issued since April 2016 as an accurate figure for the current level of need is tenuous. Whilst the legislative requirement at present to grant 456 more permissions remains, the evidence behind that figure is not robust.
14. In the particular circumstances of this case, having regard to the findings in relation to location and with four self-build dwellings recently permitted but not yet built in Barrington, the legislative requirement for additional self-build plots in the district as a whole does not outweigh the conflict with the locational policies of the development plan and the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area⁴.

Conclusion

15. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR

² Corrected and clearer table provided by the Council for this case.

³ The number of registrations during base periods 1 and 2 was coincidentally exactly met by permissions three years later. No figures are provided for any permissions issued between April 2016 and April 2019.

⁴ The parties refer to various allowed and dismissed appeals for self-build housing in the district but given their differing conclusions and local circumstances these do not assist in the determination of this appeal.