



Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 28 August 2025

Site visit made on 28 August 2025

by **B Pattison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/25/3364090

Land Adj & Rear of 30 Flitton Road, Greenfield

Grid Ref Easting: 505630, Grid Ref Northing: 234969

- 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 Laura McLoughlin against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is CB/25/00049/FULL.
 - The development proposed is New self build 4 bedroom chalet bungalow
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for New self build 4 bedroom chalet bungalow at Land Adj & Rear of 30 Flitton Road, Greenfield, Grid Ref Easting: 505630, Grid Ref Northing: 234969 in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref CB/25/00049/FULL, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. A legal agreement in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) dated 22 September 2025 was submitted after the hearing¹. This was submitted in respect of securing the development as self-built or custom housing (SBCH). The Council has indicated it is satisfied with the UU.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed dwelling would be in a suitable location having regard to local policies concerned with housing in rural areas and the accessibility of the site to services, employment opportunities and facilities; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on the Mid Greensand Ridge Landscape Character Area and the defined Important Countryside Gap.

Reasons

Suitable location

4. The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) (LP) establishes a settlement hierarchy based on access to services and facilities, to guide the appropriate

¹ Document 1

location of new development. Policy SP7 of the LP identifies settlement envelopes as a means of distinguishing settlements from the surrounding countryside. Greenfield and Flitton are designated as Small Villages as set out in Policy SP7.

5. The appeal site lies outside the defined settlement envelopes for both villages. Beyond these envelopes, the Council seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, permitting only certain forms of development. The main parties agree that the site lies outside a defined settlement envelope and that the proposal does not accord with the types of development permitted by Policy SP7.
6. The appellant has highlighted the presence of nearby facilities, including a village hall, sports ground, two public houses, and a church, suggesting these contribute to the sustainability of the site. During my site visit, I walked between the appeal site and these facilities, all of which are within a comfortable walking distance and accessible via pedestrian footways.
7. The site is also located approximately 3km from the nearest Major Service Centre, Flitwick, which offers a broader range of shops, services, and a railway station. The nearest bus stop is situated on Flitton Road, within walking distance of the site access, and provides six services per day between Monday and Saturday to and from Flitwick.
8. While it is accepted by both parties that some journeys by future occupiers would likely be made by private vehicle, the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (the Framework) acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will differ between urban and rural areas. Any car journeys to facilities would likely be short and would not be accessed differently to the numerous existing residents within the immediate vicinity of the site. On balance, I consider that future residents would have access to a reasonable range of services and amenities to meet day-to-day needs, some of which could be accessed by means other than the private car.
9. I have been referred to previous appeal decisions at nearby 50 Flitton Road (APP/P0240/W/18/3205207), and at the appeal site itself (APP/P0240/W/17/3179844). I note that the Inspector for the 50 Flitton Road appeal found that the local facilities would not meet all of the day to day needs of future residents. However, the Inspector of the previous appeal at 30 Flitton Road concluded that future occupants of the proposed development would have reasonable access to services and facilities without relying solely on the private vehicle. Indeed, I have agreed with this finding.
10. Notwithstanding the above findings regarding accessibility, the location of the proposed development would be contrary to the Council's spatial strategy for the distribution of housing, as set out in Policy SP7. This policy seeks to direct new residential development to sites within defined settlement envelopes. There would therefore be an 'in principle' policy harm resulting from the location of this development. I return to this in the planning balance.

Character and appearance

11. The appeal site is a parcel of land within an undeveloped field primarily located to the rear of 30 Flitton Road (No. 30), a red brick bungalow which fronts Flitton Road. The appeal site has an existing vehicular access onto Flitton Road which is

located to the side of No. 30. Towards the rear of the site, the south western side boundary adjoins the rear gardens of dwellings on Holmewood Road.

12. Greenfield and Flitton are largely linear settlements focused around Flitton Road and Greenfield Road. The character of the area is predominantly residential, and there is variation in the built form of dwellings, which include a mix of detached bungalows, semi-detached houses and terraced houses fronting and set-back from Flitton Road.
13. It is common ground between the main parties that the appeal site lies within an area designated as an Important Countryside Gap (ICG) between the settlements of Flitton and Greenfield. During the hearing, the parties expressed differing views on whether the site lies within defined settlement 'ends'. Nonetheless, this distinction does not affect the requirement under Policy SP5 of the LP to assess whether the proposal would result in the physical or visual coalescence of settlements or undermine the separate character, appearance and identity of settlements. In addition, Policy ND1 of the Flitton, Greenfield and Pulloxhill Neighbourhood Plan (2021) (NP) outlines that built development which would encroach on the ICGs will not be supported.
14. In landscape terms, the site is within the 6B: Mid Greensand Ridge local character area (MGR LCA). The Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2024) (LCA) identifies the area as being characterised by a large scale ridge with a gently undulating ridge top and settlements dispersed along river valleys. One key identified positive feature is villages with a consistent traditional intact character which remain vulnerable to development, infill and settlement expansion and loss of individual identity. The LCA's guidelines for development refer to monitoring linear development and infilling of villages in order to prevent further settlement coalescence and loss of individual village identity.
15. The proposed dwelling would be located to the rear of No. 30. Accordingly, its siting would not extend any closer to the nearby settlement of Flitton than No. 30 itself. Although the development would be positioned nearer to existing dwellings situated to the rear within Holmewood Road, those properties are within the settlement of Greenfield, not Flitton, and therefore the gap between the settlements would not be diminished.
16. A mature hedgerow runs along the frontage of the site onto Flitton Road and continues along the side boundary of the field in which the appeal site is located. This natural screening would significantly limit visibility of the proposal from the public highway and from eastern viewpoints, such as the nearby playing fields.
17. While the development would be visible from the rear of properties on Holmewood Road, its built form would not project further into the ICG than the existing dwelling at No. 30. Taken as a whole, the proposal would not result in either physical or visual coalescence between the settlements of Flitton and Greenfield, nor would it constitute encroachment into the ICG.
18. The proposed dwelling would have two storeys and would be taller than No. 30. However, given the variation of residential properties in the local area, which includes two storey semi-detached and terraced housing on the opposite side of Flitton Road, the proposal would not be uncharacteristic.

19. Whilst the form of residential development within Greenfield is generally linear in nature, there are notable variations in the built development which deviate from the linear pattern at Holmewood Road and the cul-de-sacs of Beech Close and Oak Drive to the rear of the site. For this reason, the proposal's backland location would not appear at odds to its surroundings.
20. The proposal involves widening an existing vehicular access. Whilst this may result in a very limited loss of hedgerow fronting Flitton Road, the submitted drawings indicate that the necessary visibility splays can be achieved without significant clearance of the hedgerow.
21. The proposal would result in the loss of a small area of irregular field land between the two settlements. However, given the limited scale of the proposed built form, the proposal's limited visibility and my finding that the development would not constitute encroachment into the ICG, I conclude that this would not harm the traditional character of either Greenfield or Flitton. In turn, the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the MGR LCA.
22. Proposals within the Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area are required to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity. The main parties have agreed that a condition requiring an Ecological Enhancement Strategy (EES) would include details of hedgerow, shrub and wildflower planting/establishment. Subject to this, it seems to me, that the proposal would be able to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity.
23. Overall, I consider that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to the encroachment and coalescence of settlements and the effect on the MGR LCA. For this reason, the proposal would comply with policies SP5, HQ1, EE5 and EE8 of the LP, Policy ND1 of the NP and the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) insofar as they require proposals for new development to protect ICGs, and to be appropriate in scale and design to their setting and conserve and enhance the landscape setting and natural environment.
24. The proposal would also comply with the aims of the Framework insofar as it requires that proposals are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).

Other Matters

25. Legislation requires local planning authorities to establish and publicise a register of those who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in the authority's area for their own self-build and custom housebuilding; and to give development permission in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the authority's area in each base period².
26. Paragraph 73 b), of the Framework, supports small sites to come forward for SBCH, which contributes towards meeting the needs of groups with specific housing requirements including for those people wishing to commission or build their own homes. The benefits are recognised by the Planning Practice Guidance

² The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

(PPG) which outlines that it helps to diversify the housing market and increase customer choice.

27. As noted earlier, the appellant has submitted a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) to ensure that the dwelling is built and occupied in accordance with the legal definition as a SBCH property. I am satisfied that the undertakings secured through the UU are reasonable and necessary to make the development acceptable. They are directly related to the development and are fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to it. The UU therefore complies with the tests set out in paragraph 58 of the Framework and the requirements of Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and the Framework.
28. The UU would guarantee the site's delivery for this type of housing. As such, the proposal would assist the Council in its delivery of SBCH.

Interested parties

29. Concerns have been raised in relation to the historic clearance of orchard trees on the appeal site. However, there is little evidence before me to suggest that these trees could not have been felled. I have determined the appeal on its own merits and based on the appearance of the site during my visit.
30. An interested party has raised concerns in relation to the effect of the proposal on wildlife and biodiversity. During my site visit, the majority of the site consisted of relatively short grass land. Overall, I have been provided with no substantive evidence which would prompt me to disagree with the Council's conclusions on these matters which was that there would be no unacceptable harm in this respect. Furthermore, I have imposed a planning condition requiring the provision of an Ecological Enhancement Strategy (EES), which will provide details of measures to improve biodiversity.
31. Concerns have been raised in relation to the potential loss of privacy for the occupiers of properties on Holmewood Road as a result of the proposal's first floor windows. However, given the separation distances, angled nature of views from rear windows, and as no side facing upper floor windows are proposed, I do not find harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
32. The Parish Council indicate that the Housing Needs Survey recently conducted by the Rural Charities Commission did not identify this housing type as a requirement for the Parish. However, this is not a reason to reject proposals for the site. One of the Government's objectives is to significantly boost the supply of housing and the proposal would provide a dwelling reasonably located for local services and facilities.
33. It has been put to me that the gardens of properties in Holmewood Road have flooded in the past and the appeal site has been a valuable open site for any excess water. The Council's drainage officer was consulted and confirmed that the appeal site is in flood zone 1 with negligible ground water flood risk and a low risk of surface water flooding. Overall, I have been provided with no substantive evidence which would prompt me to disagree with the conclusions of the Council, which was that there would be no unacceptable harm in these respects.

34. An interested party has suggested that future proposals may involve development of additional parcels of land. However, I am required to assess only the proposal which forms this appeal. Any future proposals would require a new planning application.
35. In relation to concerns about the site access, I have imposed planning conditions requiring full details of the site access and the provision of visibility splays prior to the occupation of the dwelling.

Planning Balance

36. The Council does not have a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. During the hearing, the main parties agreed that the Council's housing land supply is currently 4.85 years. Consequently, in these circumstances, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged.
37. Paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework confirms that, in such circumstances, permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
38. I have found that the proposal would conflict with the settlement strategy. Consequently, there would be conflict with policy CS7 of the LP. However, I have also found that the appeal site is reasonably located to services and facilities and public transport routes. I am mindful of the advice at paragraph 110 of the Framework that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in decision-making. The overall housing position indicates that the development plan is failing to meet its strategic challenges and the settlement strategy is not working effectively. The conflict with policies relating to this matter should therefore be afforded limited weight.
39. The Framework seeks to significantly boost housing supply and highlights the important contribution small and medium sized sites can make. Whilst the provision of a single residential unit is modest, given the housing land supply position confirmed by the Council, I attribute moderate weight to this benefit. The proposal would also contribute a self-build dwelling towards meeting current demand for SBCH in the area. Given the size of the proposal I afford this moderate weight.
40. Economic benefits would result from the scheme during construction and future residents would spend in the local economy. As some of these benefits would be time limited, during construction, I give them limited weight. Due to their scale I afford limited weight to the ecological enhancements which would be secured by planning condition.
41. Overall, applying the so-called 'tilted balance', I find the benefits of the scheme, comprising the provision of self-build housing, and the various economic, biodiversity and social benefits, all taken together, clearly outweigh any harms arising. Therefore, I find the adverse effects of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the

policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Consequently, the appeal should succeed.

Conditions

42. I have had regard to the planning conditions that have been suggested by the Council. I have considered them against the tests in the Framework and the advice in the PPG. I have made such amendments as necessary to comply with those documents and for clarity and consistency.
43. I have imposed a standard condition relating to the commencement of development and an approved plans condition in the interests of certainty.
44. In the interests of character and appearance I have imposed the conditions requiring details of materials and existing and final ground and slab levels of the buildings. A condition requiring details of the hard and soft landscaping of the development is also necessary in the interests of character and appearance.
45. For ecological and biodiversity reasons I have imposed a condition requiring the submission of an Ecological Enhancement Strategy. A condition requiring compliance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is necessary to ensure that the proposal does not have a harmful effect on protected species.
46. Conditions requiring the details of the vehicular access junction design, surfacing, a refuse collection point, the maximum gradient of the vehicular access and visibility splays are necessary in the interests of highways safety. I have also imposed a condition requiring on-site refuse storage in the interests of residential amenity.
47. Bearing in mind the PPG's advice that the blanket removal of freedoms to carry out small scale domestic alterations that would otherwise not require an application for planning permission are unlikely to meet the tests of reasonableness and necessity, I have not been provided with sufficient evidence as to why it would be reasonable or necessary to restrict permitted development rights for the dwelling. Therefore, I have not imposed the suggested condition which would control the location of gates at the appeal site.

Conclusion

48. The proposal would conflict with the development plan but material considerations, specifically the presumption in favour of sustainable development, indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be allowed.

B Pattison

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Stephen Connell, GC Planning Partnership

Laura McLoughlin, Appellant

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Jade Moss, Central Bedfordshire Council

Carolyn Cox, Central Bedfordshire Council

Phillip E Hughes, PHD Chartered Town Planners Limited

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT OR AFTER THE HEARING

1. Unilateral Undertaking dated 22 September 2025
2. Housing Trajectory for Central Bedfordshire (Completions as at 31/03/2025) and Five year housing land supply statement and methodology (For the five-year period commencing 1st April 2025 v3)

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers OAKPL-37 , OAKPL-34
- 3) No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Strategy (EES) for the creation of new wildlife features such as hibernacula, the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee boxes in buildings/structures, hedgehog holes in fences and tree, hedgerow, shrub and wildflower planting/establishment has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The EES shall include the:

- a) purpose and objectives for the proposed works;
- b) detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including, where relevant, type and source of materials to be used);
- c) extent and location of proposed works shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;

- d) timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction;
- e) persons responsible for implementing the works;
- f) details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance.

The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

- 4) No development shall take place until details of the existing and final ground and slab levels of the building hereby approved have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include sections through both the site and the adjoining properties, the location of which shall first be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the site shall be developed in full accordance with the approved details.
- 5) Prior to the construction of the dwelling above damp proof course level, details of external materials shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.
- 6) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling a scheme for the provision of waste receptacles for the dwelling shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The receptacles shall be provided before occupation of the dwelling.
- 7) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling details of the junction of the proposed vehicular access with the highway shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The dwelling shall not be occupied until the junction has been constructed in accordance with the approved details.
- 8) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling visibility splays shall be provided at the junction of the access with the public highway. The minimum dimensions to provide the required splay lines shall be 2.4 metres measured along the centre line of the proposed access from its junction with the channel of the public highway and 43.0 metres measured from the centre line of the proposed access along the line of the channel of the public highway. The required visibility splays shall remain free of any obstruction to visibility for the perpetuity of the development.
- 9) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling details of a refuse collection point located at the site frontage and outside of the public highway and any visibility splays shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented prior to occupation of any dwelling and shall be retained thereafter.
- 10) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling all ecological measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the October 2024 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report as already submitted with the planning

application and agreed in principle with the Local Planning Authority prior to determination.

- 11) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling details of the vehicular access, which will be surfaced in bituminous or other similar durable material (not loose aggregate) for a distance of 5.0m into the site, measured from the highway boundary, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Arrangements shall be made for surface water drainage from the site to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge into the highway. The approved vehicular access surfacing and drainage shall be installed prior to the occupation of the dwelling.
- 12) The maximum gradient of the vehicular access shall be 5% (1 in 20) for the first 6.0m measured into the site from the highway boundary and thereafter 1 in 10.
- 13) The dwelling shall not be occupied until a landscaping scheme to include all hard and soft landscaping and a scheme for landscape maintenance for a period of five years following the implementation of the landscaping scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented by the end of the full planting season immediately following the completion and/or first use of any separate part of the development (a full planting season means the period from October to March). The trees, shrubs and grass shall subsequently be maintained in accordance with the approved landscape maintenance scheme and any which die or are destroyed during this period shall be replaced during the next planting season.

END OF SCHEDULE