



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by **C Mayes CMLI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0515/W/25/3368667

94 Westfield Road, Manea, Cambridgeshire PE15 0LS

- 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 Colin Ronald against the decision of Fenland District Council.
 - The application Ref is F/YR24/0707/O.
 - The development proposed is to erect up to 4 dwellings with matters committed in respect of access and scale.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the process of the application the appellant agreed to commit the matter of scale to be determined. Accordingly, the Council amended the description of the proposed development to include this matter. The appellant agreed to the amended description. As such, I have adopted the description of the development from the decision notice and the appeal form in the banner heading above. Therefore, the appeal scheme relates to an outline proposal, with access and scale to be considered at this stage, and with all other matters reserved for future consideration. I have considered the appeal accordingly.
3. The application was accompanied by an indicative layout plan showing the layout of the dwellings and landscaping (among other things), which I shall treat as being for illustrative purposes only.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of current and future occupants, with particular regard to outlook and privacy; and,
 - whether the proposed development provides acceptable access, parking and manoeuvring arrangements for vehicles.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is located toward the western end of the village of Manea. Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan, May 2014, (LP) identifies Manea as growth village where

development that contributes to the sustainability of the settlement and does not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area may be acceptable.

6. The area surrounding the appeal site is predominantly residential in character and appearance featuring a mix of single- and two-storey, detached, semi-detached and terraced houses constructed from a variety of materials. Most properties are set within moderate to large gardens giving the area a spacious character without a prevailing architectural style or type of dwelling.
7. However, a consistent pattern of development is evident, characterised by long, narrow undeveloped plots extending to the rear of houses. To the north of Westfield Road several plots extend to the Darcey Lode and collectively and individually form a verdant and spacious buffer that relates to the surrounding countryside and separates the built-up area of the settlement from open agricultural land. Where development has taken place to the rear of properties, or where plots have been combined to accommodate larger groups of houses, substantial areas of open green space has been preserved between the Darcey Lode and the housing, maintaining the area's open character.
8. 94 Westfield Road (No 94) is a two-storey house fronting onto the road with a long, narrow plot of land extending to the rear, terminating at the Darcey Lode. Part of the plot is maintained as garden with outbuildings, while the remainder of the plot is unmaintained grassland and scrub. This configuration aligns with the prevailing pattern of development in the area and contributes positively to the village's spacious, verdant character.
9. The proposal would introduce 4 single-storey houses to the rear of No 94. Although the layout of development has not been committed at this stage, an indicative layout shows a long, straight access road with three houses to one side and one at the end. Houses to Plots 2 to 4 would occupy most of the depth of their respective plots, with private amenity space to one side. Plot 1, at the end of the access road, would occupy most of the site's width, with private amenity space to the rear. Given the constrained and narrow nature of the site any feasible scheme is likely to follow a similar layout. This would create a cramped form of development which is indicative of overdevelopment.
10. The western boundary of the appeal site is mainly a hedgerow with mature trees at regular intervals, beyond which lies open grassland. Outline planning permission exists for up to 26 houses on the adjacent land (ref. F/YR22/1156/O) but at the time of the appeal, a reserved matters application (F/YR/0635/RM) was still pending determination. The indicative layout for this scheme shows an estate-type development of detached houses that maintains substantial open space between the built form the development and the Darcey Lode. The permitted scheme differs significantly from the appeal proposal in these regards. Although development is permitted on the adjacent site, there is no guarantee that it will either be completed or follow the indicative layout.
11. The eastern boundary is fenced and separates the site from a similar narrow plot to the rear of 92 Westfield Road, which, while including a residential annex and outbuildings, is predominantly open grassland.
12. Therefore, the proposed development is not adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village and would significantly extend the developed area of the village, through a ribbon of development, into land that serves as an undeveloped buffer between the built form of the settlement and the countryside. While the proposed development would not be prominent within the streetscene, it would be seen from neighbouring properties and would substantially and harmfully extend the built-up footprint of the settlement into valuable open space.

13. Consequently, the proposal would be at odds with the established pattern of development and would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy LP12 of the LP and DM3 of the Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland Supplementary Planning Document, July 2014, which in combination require, among other things, new development to be in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village and to avoid adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Living conditions

14. The combination of the scale of the dwellings and the proportions of the appeal site is likely to result in a layout that would significantly limit the outlook from the proposed dwellings. Specifically, as a result of the narrow width of the site Plots 2 to 4 are likely to be tightly positioned between the site boundary on one side and the shared access road and boundary on the other.
15. In particular, the rear elevations of Plots 2 to 4 are likely to be in very close proximity to the site's eastern boundary, which the indicative layout plans show would be lined with a 1.8 metre close-boarded fence. Given the limited separation between the dwelling's rear elevation and the tall site boundary, there would be limited outlook from the rear elevations which future occupants would be likely to find oppressive.
16. There is no substantive evidence to suggest that the scheme would adversely affect the amenity of occupants of neighbouring properties. The development would be limited to single-storey buildings, and the height and nature of the proposed boundaries, as indicated on the plans, along with the separation distances between the proposed and existing properties, would adequately prevent overlooking or overshadowing. In this regard the proposal would not harm the amenity of existing neighbouring occupants.
17. While the appeal site would be overlooked by existing 2 to 3 storey dwellings on Smart Close, as well as, to a lesser extent, by properties on Dunvegan Close and any future dwellings to the west, the separation distances between these properties and the appeal site are sufficient. As a result, any intervisibility or mutual overlooking between neighbouring properties would be comparable to what is commonly found in residential areas. Therefore, the proposal would not result in an unusual or unacceptable degree of overlooking or loss of privacy for future occupants.
18. Nevertheless, for the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the proposed development would fail to provide acceptable living conditions for future occupants in terms of outlook. As a result, the scheme would conflict with Policy LP2 of the LP, which requires development, among other things, to deliver high levels of residential amenity.

Access, parking and manoeuvring

19. The proposed development would be served by a 6m wide shared access road, providing sufficient width for vehicles to pass each other. An intermediate turning head is indicated approximately halfway along the road, enabling vehicles, including refuse vehicles, to turn within the site. While no comments were received from the Refuse Officer, due to the site's highly constrained nature, it is uncertain whether a single refuse collection point could be accommodated within the site. As such, refuse vehicles would need to traverse the entire length of the access road to service each plot, and to manoeuvre and reverse along a substantial portion of the service road, potentially increasing the risk of conflict with other road users.

20. The indicative layout demonstrates that adequate parking and acceptable access to and from Westfield Road would be achieved, and the Highways Authority did not raise any objections to the scheme. However, it is my planning judgement that the combination of the access road's length and limited manoeuvring space would likely result in an arrangement where vehicles and other road users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists, would come into conflict.
21. Consequently, while providing acceptable parking and access to the highway, the scheme fails to demonstrate acceptable manoeuvring arrangements for vehicles within the site. Therefore, I conclude that the scheme would conflict with Policy LP15 of the LP, which requires development, among other things, to be well-designed to allow safe and convenient access for all, giving priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

Other Matters

22. The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) seeks to significantly boost housing supply and indicates that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable land within settlements for homes. I acknowledge that the site has a low probability of flooding, is not within a conservation area nor the setting of a listed building and is within a settlement with a railway station, albeit considerable distance from the appeal site. There have been no objections from any technical consultees. However, the lack of objections and the absence of harm or conflict with other relevant development plan policies is a neutral factor and does not weigh in favour of the proposal. Furthermore, compliance with Building Regulations regarding heat loss would likely be a requirement of any acceptable form of development and is, therefore, not determinative in this case.
23. The evidence refers to other developments in the surrounding area. I have taken this into account in terms of any influence on the character and appearance of the area so far as I am able based on the limited information before me. The site north-west of 100 Westfield Road (F/YR24/0899/O) is seen within the context of buildings associated with West Wood Farm and dwellings along Westfield Road. The site north-west of Cedar Lodge (F/YR20/0363/F) is a considerable distance from the appeal site and much closer to the village centre and, therefore, is not within the same context.
24. The site to the rear of 36 Westfield Road (F/YR22/0495/O) is less tightly constrained, closer to the village centre and would deliver self-build development. I am told that the sites at 18 Westfield Road (F/YR24/0633/F) and 37a Westfield Road (F/YR23/0337/F) were brownfield sites, and that permission for development on land north-east of Trotters Lodge (F/YR23/0431/O) would replace gypsy and traveller pitches. Therefore, in each of these cases, the policy position and context of each development in question differs significantly from the appeal before me. Notwithstanding the above, I am not aware of the full circumstances of these other cases and in any event each scheme must be considered and determined on its individual merits.
25. I acknowledge the submissions in support of the proposed development. However, in this case the lack of maintenance of the land and any increase in natural surveillance are not determinative to this appeal. I have not been provided with any evidence of an undersupply of bungalows or family homes in the area. As such, in this case the provision of 4 houses would not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

26. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

C Mayes

INSPECTOR