



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 September 2025

by **F P Tinsley MA (Hons) MBA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/25/3366192

Meadow View, Malton Lane, Meldreth, Cambridge SG8 6PE

- 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 Mr and Mrs Robert Taylor against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application reference is Ref: 25/00573/PIP.
 - The development proposed is 'Permission in principle for two self-build units.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal seeks permission in principle for development. According to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), this is an alternative route for securing planning permission for housing-led schemes. The process comprises two stages: the first stage, permission in principle, establishes whether a site is suitable in principle; the second stage, technical details consent, assesses the detailed development proposals. This appeal relates solely to the first stage.
3. The PPG further clarifies that the scope of considerations at the permission in principle stage is limited to location, land use, and the amount of development proposed. All other matters are addressed during the subsequent technical details consent stage, should permission in principle be granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. In addition to the location plan, the appeal documents include an indicative site plan showing two detached dwellings with shared access via Malton Lane, along with supporting documentation. I have taken these materials into account in my determination. This layout and access arrangement formed the basis of the Council's consideration, and I have assessed the appeal on the same basis.
5. Article 5A(3)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017, as amended by Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017, requires that any grant of permission in principle must specify the minimum and maximum number of dwellings permitted. In this case, the range identified in Section 3 of the planning application form is between two and two dwellings.

6. The description of development specifically refers to 'custom/self-build dwellings.' This use is defined in Section 1 of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. I have determined the appeal on the basis that any future technical details consent approval would include an appropriate mechanism to restrict the occupation of the dwellings to custom and self-build use. There is reference to 'a rural worker dwelling' at paragraph 4.6 of the appellant's Statement of Case. However, there is no reference to such an occupancy restriction in the description of development or elsewhere in the appeal documentation and the application seeks planning permission for two dwellings, I have therefore assessed the proposal as two dwellings not restricted to rural worker occupation.
7. The appellant has challenged the Council's current Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) position. In response to a specific request to address the appellant's challenge, the Council confirmed that the current 5YHLS position is 5.5 years, as detailed in the Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Calculations Report (April 2025). Contrary to the appellant's position, I have seen no compelling evidence to suggest that the establishment of the Cambridge Growth Company or other developments renders the Housing Trajectory, 5YHLS position or the relevant Local Plan policies outdated. There is no policy requirement or other reason specific to South Cambridgeshire that mandates exceeding the 5YHLS target beyond what is required elsewhere. I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis, concluding that the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and referenced in Policy S/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (the Local Plan) is not triggered in this context.

Main Issues

8. The main issues are:
 - the appropriateness of the location of the proposed development having regard to the proposed use and the amount of development proposed.
 - the need for sites for self-build or custom-build housing.

Reasons

Location

9. The appeal site is located approximately 900 metres from the designated village development framework area of Meldreth, via Malton Lane, as defined by Policy S/7 of the Local Plan. This policy requires that development, such as the proposal, should take place on sites within village frameworks or on allocated land. Outside these boundaries, development is restricted to uses that can demonstrate a need for a countryside location. Local Plan Policy TI/2 seeks to ensure that developments are located in a way that reduces the need to travel, particularly by car and promotes sustainable transport modes appropriate to their location.
10. I consider the appeal site, formerly used as kennels, to be previously developed land. However, I do not have sufficient evidence to confirm that it is currently in use for residential storage purposes and would therefore fall within Use Class C3. It is not within the scope of this appeal to determine the lawful use of the site. Importantly, Policy S/7 does not make exceptions for development on previously

developed land; development outside the village framework area on such land must still demonstrate a need for a countryside location.

11. The appellant argues that if the appeal site were located within the Green Belt, an area afforded a higher level of protection, it would constitute 'grey belt' land, and in that context, residential development should be considered appropriate. However, even in such a hypothetical scenario, an assessment of the site's sustainability would be required under paragraph 155(c) of the Framework. Likewise, in the present case, where the site is not located within the Green Belt, an assessment of sustainability in terms of access is still required.
12. The appeal site is separated from the village of Meldreth by open countryside. It is designated as a Group Village and offers some though limited services and facilities. There is no dedicated pedestrian footpath along Malton Lane, which is unlit and subject to the national speed limit for most of its length. Potential changes to the speed control regime in the area identified by the appellant do not affect the majority of the route from the village to the appeal site. Although there is some potential for cycle access, I consider this to be an unsustainable location, detached from the village, representing encroachment into the countryside. For all practical purposes, access to the site would be largely dependent on the use of a private car.
13. In this regard, I note that the route would be particularly hazardous for pedestrians and cyclists outside of daylight hours and during inclement weather. While I acknowledge that paragraph 115 of the Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and that this should be considered in both plan-making and decision-making, paragraph 115(b) specifically states that development should provide safe and suitable access for all users. This would not be achieved in the proposal before me on account of its location.
14. I have not found conflict with Local Plan Policy NH/2, which states that development will only be permitted where it respects, retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the landscape in which it is located. As a previously developed site containing buildings, in this context I am of the view that two buildings could potentially be accommodated in a way that enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the landscape. However, assessment of this matter would depend significantly on the detailed design and scale of the proposed dwellings and landscaping, which would be considered as part of a subsequent application.
15. For the reasons outlined above, the proposal conflicts significantly with Local Plan Policies S/7 and TI/2. The appeal site is not an appropriate location for the proposed development, having regard to the proposed use and the amount of development proposed.

Self- and custom-build housing

16. Local Plan Policy S/2 seeks to deliver housing in sustainable locations that meet local needs and aspirations, offering choice in terms of type, size, tenure, and cost. Policy S/3 states that the Council will take a positive approach to decision-making that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the Framework.

17. Section 2A of the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) places a duty on local planning authorities to grant a sufficient number of suitable permissions to meet the demand for self-build and custom-build housing within their area.
18. In South Cambridgeshire, the Local Plan seeks to address this need through Policy H/9, which requires that plots for self-build and custom-build housing be included in all housing sites of 20 or more dwellings. However, despite this policy having been in place for several years, it is not disputed that the District currently has a substantial shortfall in permissions for self-build and custom-build housing compared to the number of new entries on the Self-Build Register. According to the Council's figures, the cumulative shortfall up to September 2024 was estimated at 267 units.
19. An appeal decision by another Inspector has been referred to where custom and self-build housing was allowed at another site. While each case must be considered on its own merits, I have reviewed this decision. It is clear that a balancing exercise was undertaken, weighing the benefits of providing custom and self-build housing against other matters including the specific locational and sustainability factors of the case. A similar approach is required in this instance.
20. The Council acknowledges that the proposal to provide self-build and custom-build housing should be afforded significant weight in the planning balance. However, they consider this is not sufficient to outweigh the harm identified in this instance. In this regard, I also note paragraph 73(b) of the Framework, which specifically states that determining authorities should seek opportunities through policies and decisions to support small sites coming forward for self-build and custom-build housing.
21. For these reasons, I consider that the need for custom and self-build plots, and the benefits of the appeal proposal in meeting part of that need, accords with Local Plan Policy S/2 which seeks to deliver housing that meets local needs and aspirations, offers choice in terms of type, size, tenure, and cost should command significant weight. It does not comply with the requirement of the policy that this should be in sustainable locations for the reasons noted above.

Other Matters

22. Local Plan policies S/10 is not relevant to the determination of this appeal as this specifically relates to development within the development framework areas of Group Villages. As identified above the appeal site is in a location outside and is detached from the nearest Group Village which is Meldreth.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

23. The proposal would deliver two custom and self-build dwellings, contributing to the provision of this type of housing in an area where there is a significant shortfall. Although the Council is able to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing, the provision of custom and self-build housing weighs in favour of the scheme. This benefit is afforded significant weight.
24. While the Framework seeks to boost the supply of housing and specifically supports custom and self-build housing, it also promotes sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling, and public transport and encourages the planning

system to actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. I have identified that the site is located in an unsustainable location, detached from the village of Meldreth and is situated in open countryside. The proposal would conflict significantly with Local Plan Policies S/7 and TI/2 in this regard. This harm is afforded substantial weight.

25. The conflict with the development plan is significant. The benefits of the proposal, particularly in relation to the delivery of additional custom and self-build housing, do not outweigh the conflict with the Local Plan when considered as a whole.
26. I therefore conclude that the location, land use, and amount of development proposed on the site are unacceptable. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed and permission in principle is refused.

F P Tinsley

INSPECTOR