
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2025

by **A Caines BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/25/3370454

The Laurels, Newmarket Road, Thriplow SG8 7RS

- 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 Mr M Carter against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00826/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as change of use of existing residential annexe to independent dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. However, the Council did not cite any harm to the Green Belt in its refusal reasons, and both main parties agree that the proposal would not amount to inappropriate development. Based on the evidence before me, I concur with that view and so do not consider this matter further.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the local development strategy and the accessibility of services and facilities.

Reasons

4. The appeal site forms part of a small cluster of buildings fronting the A505, but lies outside any defined settlement boundary and is within the open countryside. It is not served by a footway, streetlights, or cycle path, and no nearby bus stop has been identified. The A505 is a busy strategic route, subject to a 60mph speed limit, and its character and traffic levels are not conducive to walking or cycling. From the information before me, the nearest settlements are located approximately 2.5 to 3km away, and access to them would be heavily reliant on the private car.
5. Policy S/7 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (the CLP) (2018) restricts development outside development frameworks to uses that need to be located in the countryside or are otherwise supported by specific policies in the plan. The proposal does not fall within any of the categories of development supported by Policy S/7. In addition, Policy TI/2 seeks to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and to promote sustainable modes of transport. While paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport will vary between urban and rural areas, the

absence of infrastructure to support walking, cycling or public transport, means that the site cannot be considered accessible by sustainable travel modes. The inclusion of electric vehicle charging points may be a way of encouraging low-emission travel, but it does not reduce reliance on the private car or address the overarching policy objective of reducing the need to travel.

6. Paragraph 84 of the Framework states that planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless certain exceptions apply. While the building is existing and capable of re-use, it is not redundant or disused. Moreover, any new landscaping introduced would be limited in scope and effect, and would not amount to a meaningful enhancement in planning terms. The presence of nearby buildings does not alter the fact that the site is physically and functionally detached from any settlement and lacks access to facilities needed to support daily life. In this context, the site can reasonably be regarded as isolated for the purposes of paragraph 84.
7. Accordingly, I conclude that the site is not a suitable location for the creation of an independent dwelling. The proposal would conflict with the spatial strategy for the area and with national policy seeking to avoid isolated homes in the countryside.

Other Matters

8. The appellant contends that the proposal would not result in additional vehicle movements compared to the existing use of the building as a residential annexe, and that this represents a relevant fallback position. The annexe is physically capable of independent occupation, with its own entrance and facilities, and I accept that it could be used in a manner resembling a separate household. However, its lawful use remains ancillary to the main dwelling, and such occupation is typically associated with a single household, where journeys, deliveries and servicing are more likely to be shared or consolidated.
9. The creation of a separate planning unit would formalise independent occupation and introduce a distinct residential use. Although the physical form of the building would remain unchanged, the separation of households would be likely to result in additional trips, including those for commuting, education, shopping, social visits and servicing. These movements would be separate from those associated with the main dwelling and would not be mitigated by the shared location alone. Although there is a realistic prospect of continued use with a degree of independence, the fallback does not equate to a lawful independent dwelling and would not result in the same planning consequences, particularly in terms of trip generation and policy conflict. I therefore attach only moderate weight to the fallback position.
10. In reaching this view, I have had regard to the appeal decisions cited by the appellant (APP/X1545/W/22/3306604 and APP/W0340/W/20/3259156), in which Inspectors found that the change of use of an annexe to a separate dwelling would not materially intensify activity, and that the fallback position carried weight. However, those decisions were reached in different local policy contexts, and the sites appear to have had a closer relationship to nearby settlements, particularly in the Streatley case. In the Maldon decision, the Inspector also noted that the proposal would meet a specific identified housing need. These factors materially distinguish those cases from the current appeal, and I have reached my own conclusion based on the particular circumstances of this site and the relevant policy framework.

11. I have noted the representations made by third parties, including concerns about highway safety, waste management and light pollution. However, given my overall findings, it has not been necessary to consider these matters in detail.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. The proposal would result in the creation of a new dwelling in the countryside, in a location that is not well related to any settlement and where future occupiers would be heavily reliant on the private car. The development would conflict with the spatial strategy set out in CLP Policy S/7 and with Policy TI/2 in respect of sustainable travel. It would also conflict with paragraph 84 of the Framework, which seeks to avoid isolated homes in the countryside. This weighs heavily against the proposal.
13. The use of an existing building, introduction of new native landscaping, and the provision of renewable energy measures are acknowledged benefits, but carry limited weight given the small scale of the development. The fallback position also carries moderate weight, reflecting the annexe's physical capability for independent occupation and the realistic prospect of continued use in a similar manner. However, its lawful use remains ancillary, and the planning consequences of creating a separate dwelling would be materially different. These factors limit the weight that can be reasonably attributed to the fallback and the appeal decisions cited.
14. Although the proposal may comply with other policies in the development plan, it would conflict with the spatial strategy and with policies aimed at promoting sustainable travel, which are central to the plan's overall objectives. Compliance with other policies does not overcome this fundamental conflict.
15. In this context, the benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the significant harm arising from the site's unsustainable and isolated location. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole, and no material considerations have been advanced that would justify a decision other than in accordance with the plan. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR