



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 December 2025

by Jennifer Wallace BA(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31st December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/25/3373730

Land adjacent 1 Duloe Lane, Duloe, St Neots PE19 5HP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr T Brown against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00525/PIP.
 - The development proposed is the erection of up to 5 self build dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the address of the appeal site and the description of development from the appeal form as it more accurately describes the proposal and is consistent with the Council's decision notice.
3. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
4. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent technical details consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
5. An applicant can apply for permission in principle for a range of dwellings by expressing a minimum and maximum net number of dwellings as part of the application. In this instance, the application form and Planning Statement submitted with the application confirms that permission in principle is sought for the construction of up to five dwellings. I have therefore interpreted this as permission being sought for the erection of a minimum of one and a maximum of five dwellings at the appeal site.

¹ PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development with particular regard to:
- whether the development would be in a suitable location having regard to the development strategy and access to services and facilities; and
 - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The site is an area of undeveloped grassland. It sits in proximity to a small cluster of dwellings on Duloe Lane. There is a further small cluster of dwellings before the nucleated area of Duloe. An elevated section of the A1 lies a short distance from the site, beyond which lies the settlements of Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon.

Suitable Location

8. Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (January 2020) (BBLP) Policy 7S allows development in the countryside where it would meet specified criteria. Other policies of the BBLP referenced would not provide support for the proposal, nor is there a made Neighbourhood Plan.
9. BBLP Policy 7S exceptionally allows development in the countryside where it is well-related to the built form of other settlements. The appeal site is located away from the clustered form of Duloe, and at the furthest extent of the dispersed linear dwellings along Duloe Lane heading towards Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon. There is no footpath or illumination along the road connecting the site to Duloe. Consequently, I am not satisfied that the site is well related to the built form of Duloe or any other settlement. Given this location, nor would it contribute positively to the character of the settlement.
10. The proposal would not meet the further criteria set out in BBLP Policy 7S. There is no evidence of an identified community need specific to Duloe or its immediate surroundings. Nor is there any community support for the proposal. While the Council is not meeting the identified demand for self-build dwellings, there is no evidence before me that links that demand to this location.
11. The parties are in agreement that the appeal site is not isolated for the purposes of paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, while it may be a relatively short distance from Eaton Ford, there is not a continuous footpath. Nor is the road lit and it is subject to the national speed limit in places. This would not be an attractive route for pedestrians and less confident cyclists, particularly in the winter months with shorter hours of daylight or in poor weather. It therefore seems unlikely that using the bus stop at the junction of Duloe Lane and Meadowsweet would be a practicable option for future occupiers. Meeting day to day needs would likely be reliant on the private car.
12. The site is therefore not a suitable location having regard to the development strategy and access to services and facilities. It would be contrary to BBLP Policies 3S, 4S, 7S and 53 which taken together seek to direct development where it would be well related to existing settlements and with convenient access to local services by foot, cycle and public transport.

Character and Appearance

13. There would be an inevitable change to the character and appearance of the site were it to be developed for housing. However, it is an ordinary parcel of land. While there is some landscaping to its boundaries, this is entirely typical of the surrounding area, which is also ordinary in appearance. There is an intrinsic value to the countryside however the loss of this small site would not result in unacceptable harm to the wider value of the surrounding countryside.
14. The scope of the permission in principle would allow for between 1 and 5 dwellings to be erected. This would result in a low density of development, irrespective of how many dwellings were proposed. However, given the rural nature of the surrounding area, and the scale of surrounding plots, this amount of development would be capable of integrating with the character and appearance of the area. The precise nature of the proposal would be assessed at the technical details stage.
15. Insofar as can be assessed at the permission in principle stage, the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be in accordance with BBLP Policies 7S (xi), 28S (i, ii, and iv), 29 (i and ii), and 30 (i) which taken together require development to respect the context within which it will sit.

Other Matters

16. The submitted evidence refers to the site being within the setting of The Ankor, a Grade II listed building². Mindful of the statutory duty set out in s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving its setting. The special interest and significance of The Ankor is derived from its architectural and historic interest as a vernacular building, previously in use as a public house. Pertinent to this appeal, further interest is derived from its setting which is informed by its expansive plot and position in proximity to the highway. The listed building is separated from the appeal site by two properties. Insofar as can be assessed at this stage, I find that the setting of The Ankor, would be preserved. Consequently, so would the special interest of the listed building. I note the Council had no concerns in this regard either.
17. There would be an undoubted benefit from the delivery of additional dwellings. This would be enhanced by the additional supply of self build dwellings which are specifically supported by BBLP Policy 59S and where there is currently a shortfall in supply. The delivery of the dwellings as self-build could be secured at the technical details consent stage. There would also be economic benefits during both the construction and occupation stages of the development, although I have not been provided with evidence which demonstrates a higher level of economic benefit from self build schemes. Nor could it be secured at this stage that houses would be constructed to a higher environmental standard.
18. There were no objections from a number of technical consultees to the proposal including highways and environmental health. The site is not at an unacceptable risk of flooding. No protected species were identified on site and existing trees could be retained. There is no reason a scheme could not be designed which

² List Entry Number: 1114111 Date first listed: 18 August 1983

would have an acceptable effect on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and which would provide suitable highways access. However, even discounting these are matters to be addressed at the technical details stage, they are to be expected of any well-designed development and so would be neutral in my assessment. While I have been directed to findings in other appeals, I have assessed this proposal on its individual merits.

Planning Balance

19. It is not in dispute that the Council can demonstrate a 3.46 year supply of housing land, and in the circumstances of this case, paragraph 11dii of the Framework is engaged. This sets out that planning 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 regard to key policies.
20. There would be a benefit from the delivery of additional dwellings given the Council cannot demonstrate the requisite supply. It is intended that the proposed dwellings would be self build and so would also contribute to that supply where there is also a shortfall. There would also be economic benefits arising during the construction and occupation stages of the development. I attach limited weight to these given the small scale of the proposal, even were five dwellings brought forward.
21. Against these benefits are the adverse impacts I have identified in respect of the conflict with the settlement strategy and the ability to access services and facilities by means other than the private car. I reduce the weight to the conflict with the settlement strategy given the not inconsequential shortfall in housing land supply and the supply of self-build dwellings. However, paragraph 115 of the Framework is clear that sustainable modes of transport should be prioritised. While paragraph 110 of the Framework acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas, there are no reasonable public transport opportunities available at this site. Consequently, I find that the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. The proposal therefore does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Conclusion

22. The appeal proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the Framework, of sufficient weight to indicate the decision should be taken otherwise. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jennifer Wallace

INSPECTOR