



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2025

by G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3374592

Land to the west of Parsonage Farm, Parsonage Lane, Parsonage Downs, Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 2AT

- 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 & Mrs Marjoribanks against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/25/1551/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of single storey self-build dwelling and associated infrastructure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. In the banner heading above, I have used the site address provided by the appellant in the appeal submission as this more accurately identifies the appeal site.
3. I have a statutory duty under sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to the significance of nearby designated heritage assets.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a wedge-shaped plot within a paddock on the northern side of Parsonage Lane on the edge of the settlement. It lies to the rear of properties on Parsonage Downs and across the lane from a bus depot. It is in an elevated position, adjoining open countryside with open and sweeping views north and east across surrounding agricultural land which slopes down towards the river.
6. The site lies just outside the boundary of the Great Dunmow Conservation Area. The Council's Character Appraisal mentions that the conservation area centres on

a small market town with an extensive rural hinterland. It states that Parsonage Downs has not been affected by crowding or enclosure from modern development, as has been seen in parts of the settlement, and still retains its open countryside setting for the most part. Paragraph 1.20 further advises that it is important that the countryside setting of this part of the conservation area is not further compromised. I saw on site that in the vicinity of the appeal site, the open, agrarian landscape on the fringe of the historic settlement contributes to the way in which the conservation area is seen and appreciated. The appeal site therefore contributes to the area's significance.

7. Two groups of Grade II listed buildings are near to the appeal site. First, is a cluster of buildings comprising Parsonage Farm located just beyond the appeal site on Parsonage Lane. Second, are several properties on Parsonage Downs with their rear gardens facing towards the appeal site.
8. In relation to the Parsonage Farm group, the list description for The Parsonage mentions that the house dates from the early 19th century and is a two storey, timber framed house and describes its form and architectural features. It is sited diagonally across the lane from the appeal site, and is in large, mature grounds. Although its main elevation faces west, its position means that it is prominently viewed from the lane. Parsonage Barn, now a dwelling, is described in the listing as dating from the 18th century and is timber framed with weatherboarding. It also mentions the form and arrangement of the buildings and some features. The collection of buildings arranged around a yard are partly viewed from the appeal site across intervening agricultural land.
9. Just beyond, to the south east of these listed buildings, is Parsonage Farm Moated Site, a scheduled monument (moated site). The list description mentions that it is a small, moated site to the east of Parsonage Farm located on the tip of a broad spur of land which overlooks the river valley to the north and east. It mentions that much of the site has survived well, illustrating the appearance of the landscape in which it is set. It is one of a significant class of medieval monuments which are important for understanding the distribution of wealth and status in the countryside. The moated site did not appear to be visible from the appeal site but nevertheless it forms part of the grouping of historic assets at Parsonage Farm which collectively derive some of their significance from their open, rural location.
10. For the purposes of this appeal, the significance of this collection of designated heritage assets associated with Parsonage Farm, derives principally from their age, historic fabric, functional relationships and their potential to yield information about past civilisations. Their significance is not limited to what is visible or experienced directly on site, but also includes the contribution made by their wider setting. The historic association between The Parsonage and Parsonage Barn is best seen in views from the north, including on the approach to the settlement on the B1008. Here their prominent siting on the skyline and relationship with the surrounding landscape can be appreciated. From this viewpoint, the appeal site, lying in the wider foreground to these listed buildings, is part of the landscape in which the buildings are viewed and appreciated.
11. The listed buildings on Parsonage Downs comprise 16-18 Parsonage Downs, Rosemary Cottage, and Burgoyne Cottage. They are a group of small, vernacular dwellings dating from the late 16th century and are mainly of timber framed construction. The list descriptions comment on their age and form, together with

their detailing, and assigns them group value. For the purpose of this appeal, their significance mainly derives from their age, small scale, and their vernacular character. The open fields to their rear, which includes the appeal site, reinforce their rural character. This relationship can be viewed from Parsonage Lane and from the north.

12. The appeal proposal would comprise a single storey, three-bedroom dwelling, in an L-shaped plan sited close to Parsonage Lane. It would have a shallow, pitched slate roof and timber clad walls. Most of the boundary vegetation would be retained along with additional planting.
13. The proposal would see the introduction of built form where there is currently none and although the size of the dwelling has been reduced from previous proposals, it would nevertheless be a significant structure on the north side of the lane. Although it would be relatively near to the surrounding built form, the dwelling, set within its large plot, would breach the clearly legible boundary of that built form and would appear isolated and unrelated to it. It would therefore appear as an unwelcome and unexpected intrusion into open agricultural land surrounding the settlement.
14. Whilst the design of the dwelling is described as having an agrarian character, taking inspiration from traditional forms and materials, it is unclear how its built form would be in keeping with its historic surroundings. Its shallow roof pitch, large areas of glazing and overall appearance is more representative of a typical, modern dwelling. The proposal may be lower in height than nearby buildings but in this open setting it would be no less conspicuous.
15. The proposal would, therefore, represent a harmful intrusion into the open countryside surrounding the settlement which would go against the guidance in the conservation area character appraisal, described above. Also, placing a dwelling in the field near to several listed buildings would cause harm to the extent to which the rural setting contributes to their significance. The dwelling would be clearly seen from northerly views, including from the B1008. From here, the proposed modern, isolated dwelling would appear in the wider foreground of these historic buildings, eroding their setting and prominence in the landscape. That presence would be far greater than the structures on the nearby bus depot as these are set back and views are largely screened by mature boundary vegetation. The proposal would therefore harm the way in which the listed buildings are appreciated and understood and therefore eroding their significance. Additional landscaping including tree planting may soften these views to some extent but could not mitigate the visual harm caused by a dwelling and domestic activity associated with it, especially during the winter months.
16. The proposal would, therefore, have a harmful effect on the significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets, including the contribution that the setting makes to the significance of the conservation area. Therefore, in relation to these heritage assets, the expectations of the Act are not met.
17. Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of those assets and any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. In relation to all these

assets, I find the harm, in the language of the Framework, to be at the lower end of 'less than substantial' in this instance. This commands considerable importance and weight and is not to be treated as a less than substantial objection to the proposal. The Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

18. The development would provide one dwelling which would add to the overall stock and choice of residential dwellings and support the supply of homes. A boost to housing supply is an important Framework consideration in favour of the development, especially given that the Council is unable to demonstrate a Framework compliant housing land supply. The proposal is also described as a 'self-build dwelling' and on this point the Framework recognises the need to provide housing for different groups of people including those wishing to commission and build their own homes. A self-build dwelling has the potential to make a limited but important contribution to the housing mix and the need for such plots in the area. The dwelling would also be within an established residential area and there would be some social and economic benefits during construction and occupation, and it would contribute to the vitality of local services. However, considering all these benefits, given the size of the development proposed, these public benefits would be modest in scale, and I attribute them limited weight.
19. The appellant suggests that the scheme would be of quality design, would meet high environmental standards and improve biodiversity. These aspects of the proposal generally represent good planning expected in all cases, and therefore I attribute them limited weight.
20. Given the above, I conclude that the overall limited weight that I attribute to the public benefits would be insufficient to outweigh the level of harm to the designated heritage assets, which collectively I consider to be significant and to which I attach great weight. As such, the proposal would not comply with the Framework. In addition, there is no clear and convincing justification for the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets. Furthermore, I have found harm to the character and appearance of the wider area. Consequently, the proposal would not comply with Policy S7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005). Whilst Policy S7 may be out of date in some regards, its provisions in relation to the protection and enhancement of the character of the countryside remain relevant and comply with the Framework.

Planning balance

21. The lack of a Framework compliant housing land supply triggers the presumption in favour of development as set out in paragraph 11d) of the Framework. Paragraph 11d)i. indicates that permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for the development proposed. Footnote 7 of the Framework identifies designated heritage assets as assets of particular importance.
22. I have found that the harm to the designated heritage assets would not be outweighed by the public benefits, and this provides a strong reason for refusing the development. Consequently, this disengages the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 11d) and the scheme should be determined under a normal planning balance.

23. I have already summarised above the public benefits, including one additional dwelling which is described as 'self-build', both important considerations. I have also acknowledged the support to the vitality of the community, including supporting local services and facilities, and the development would provide some construction jobs. Future occupants would also help sustain local businesses.
24. I have also noted the appellant's comments regarding quality design, meeting environmental standards and biodiversity provision, but these are factors expected of all developments. Matters such as satisfactory amenity levels for occupiers, causing no adverse harm to neighbouring amenities, and acceptable parking and access are neutral matters weighing neither for nor against the proposal.
25. The proposal would have a significantly harmful effect on designated heritage assets which should be attributed great weight. I have also found harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area. These matters weigh heavily against the scheme.
26. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Overall, the cumulative benefits of the proposed development, which include the matters I have highlighted above, are clearly worthwhile but nevertheless overall carry limited weight in favour of the scheme. However, these benefits would not be of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the harm and related policy conflicts that I have identified. That harm would be very significant and permanent and such that the scheme would not be in accordance with the development plan when considered as a whole.

Other Matters

27. The appellant mentions proposals for housing to the north of the appeal site. However, the appellant's submitted evidence suggests that the local plan has reached Regulation 19, and that this area is part of the local plan modifications being consulted on. The submitted evidence does not provide any certainty at this stage that this potential housing land will be taken forward when the plan is adopted. It therefore has little bearing on my consideration of this appeal. For the avoidance of doubt, even if land to the north of the appeal site was under consideration for housing development, it would not address to my satisfaction the interrelationships between the appeal site and the nearby heritage assets and the harm I have found.

Conclusion

28. For the above reasons, and having taken all other matters raised into account, there are no material considerations that indicate that the proposal should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR