Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 May 2026

by R Gee BA (Hons) Dip TP PGCert UD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 May 2026

Appeal Ref: 6003378
Land to the rear of 291-323 Ugg Mere Court Road, Ramsey Heights, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

- 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 Messrs Bedford against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application Ref is 25/00967/PIP.
- The development proposed is described as: Proposed residential development of 5-9 dwellings.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle (PiP). Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The PiP consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or PiP stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent' (TDC)) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.

3. The scope of the considerations for PiP is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent TDC application if PiP is granted. There is no dispute between the main parties with regard to the amount of development and land use, and I have no reason to take a different view. I shall therefore focus on the matters of location in my determination of the appeal.

4. An applicant can apply for PiP for a range of dwellings by expressing a minimum and maximum net number of dwellings as part of the application. In this instance, PiP has been sought for between 5-9 dwellings on the appeal site. I have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location with particular regard to the local and national policy relating to accessibility to services and facilities, and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. Ugg Mere Court Road consists of dwellings located to either side of the road set back behind parking areas and front gardens. Dwellings have reasonably long rear

gardens that follow a similar alignment. The appeal site comprises part of a wider field located to the rear of dwellings. The lack of development behind the properties provides a pleasant sense of openness that contributes positively to the character of the area.

7. The introduction of residential development in this location would contrast starkly with the established pattern of linear development as it would lie in a 'backland' position.

8. Matters in respect of the design, layout and site configuration are for consideration at the TDC stage. However, it is inherent to the principle of this proposal that it would result in a significant and harmful urbanising incursion of residential development into the countryside.

9. Landscaping and boundary treatments, to be considered at the TDC stage, could help soften the visual appearance of the development. However, such measures would not be sufficient to mitigate the encroachment of built form onto land that is currently undeveloped.

10. Ramsey Heights has limited services, as does the nearby settlement of Ramsey St Mary's. My attention has been drawn to the footway provision along Ugg Mere Court Road and that there is a bus service which connects the area to Ramsey and Peterborough. However, given the limited frequency of services it is likely that the occupiers of the new dwellings would be heavily reliant upon a private motor vehicle for accessing most day-to-day services and facilities. I am mindful that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and that car dependency is not necessarily unusual in rural locations. The proposal would not generate significant movements and is not a considerable distance from settlements that do have services and facilities. This leads me to the view that the harm from the conflict in respect of whether a sustainable location would be moderate. This, however, would not overcome the significant harm in respect of character and appearance in locational terms.

11. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the site is not suitable for residential development, having regard to its location. This draws the proposal into conflict with Parts a) and c) of Policy LP9, LP10, LP11 and Parts a, b and c) of Policy LP12 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036. Collectively, and amongst other things, these policies seek to support developments that recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and respond positively to its context.

Other Matters

12. I am satisfied that the appeal site could accommodate the quantum of development proposed. I see no reason why the development could not be designed to be made compliant with policies in respect of matters such as detailed design, access and parking, landscaping, drainage and the living conditions of future and neighbouring occupiers at the TDC stage. However, compliance with these policies would be a neutral matter.

Planning Balance

13. The Council advises it cannot demonstrate a Framework compliant Housing Land Supply. Paragraph 11d) of the Framework states that in such circumstances, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

14. The proposal would accord with the Framework insofar as it seeks to boost the supply of housing, recognising the important contribution small and medium sized sites make to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and seek to make effective use of land.

15. The proposal would result in temporary economic benefit during design and construction, and once occupied benefit to the local economy. There would be a limited contribution to the vitality of rural communities, sustaining rural services and facilities consistent with the objectives of the Framework. The benefit of the new dwellings to supply attracts moderate weight in favour of the scheme. Although a matter for the TDC stage, landscaping could provide biodiversity enhancements.

16. Whilst it did not form part of the Council's reason for refusal the proposal would result in the loss of Grade 1 agricultural land. The appellant submits that given the size of the appeal site the loss of the agricultural land would be negligible. Nevertheless, it would still be a loss of the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land, weighing against the proposal.

17. I have carefully considered the benefits of the proposal, and I attribute the social, economic and environmental benefits moderate weight in the planning balance. However, in my view, the adverse impacts of allowing the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.

Conclusion

18. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Gee

INSPECTOR