Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2026

by F P Tinsley MA (Hons) MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 March 2026

Appeal Ref: 6002186
Land West Of 2 Spring Cottage, Leighton Road, Old Weston, Huntingdon PE28 5LW

- 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 Mrs Jayne Geldard against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application reference is Ref: 25/01208/PIP
- The development proposed is 'Permission in Principle for the Erection of 1No. Self-Build Bungalow following Demolition of Existing Double Garage and Stable'

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for the erection of 1 No. Self-Build Bungalow following Demolition of Existing Double Garage and Stable at Land West Of 2 Spring Cottage, Leighton Road, Old Weston, Huntingdon PE28 5LW in accordance with the terms of the application Ref: 25/01208/PIP.

Preliminary Matters

2. 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 two 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 two stages.

3. The PPG also states 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 application, should permission in principle be granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

4. 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 principle. In this case, the range is between one and one dwelling.

5. In addition to the location plan, the appeal documents include an indicative block plan showing a detached dwelling with access from Leighton Road. This layout

and access arrangement formed the basis of the Council's consideration, and I have assessed the appeal on the same basis.

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.

Reasons

7. The appeal site lies immediately to the south-west of Leighton Road, Old Weston. It is positioned a short distance from the main body of the village and is accessed directly from Leighton Road. The site is currently occupied by a large timber-constructed garage and stables associated with 2 Spring Cottage. Both the appeal site and 2 Spring Cottage are owned by the appellant, who resides in the cottage. Together with the adjacent dwelling and associated buildings, including those on the appeal site, 2 Spring Cottage forms part of a small cluster of development within the surrounding countryside.

8. There is no physical boundary separating the appeal site from 2 Spring Cottage, and the independent access appears to exist primarily to facilitate vehicular access from the public highway to the garage on the appeal site, rather than to provide a genuinely separate, dedicated access. The relationship between the buildings on the appeal site and those associated with 2 Spring Cottage is consistent with their integrated use as part of the occupation of the principal dwelling, notwithstanding the limited planning history that exists in this regard.

9. Policies LP9 and LP10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) set out the approach to development in Small Settlements and the countryside respectively. Although the site lies outside the built-up area of the settlement and is therefore in conflict with these policies, its close relationship to the village and relationship to the existing cluster of development at Spring Cottages reduces the weight afforded to this conflict to a limited degree.

10. Locally available services and public transport options are limited; however the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas. Paragraph 89 also encourages the use of previously developed land and sites that are physically well related to existing settlements where suitable opportunities exist. Paragraph 129 supports development that makes efficient use of land, and as the appeal site comprises previously developed land, this objective is achieved. However, paragraph 129 also requires consideration of the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services, and in this respect, I find some conflict with the Framework given the restricted services and public transport options. There is also a degree of conflict with the National Design Guide (2021) in this regard.

11. Paragraph 117 of the Framework, amongst other objectives, seeks to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements. While the route from the appeal site to the village is unlit and lacks a footpath, the distance involved is short and reflects a pattern typical of rural residential development in the area, including the two adjacent dwellings at Spring Cottages. Given the rural location of the appeal site and its physical separation from the village, I do find some limited conflict with paragraph 117.

12. The Council has also assessed the proposal against Local Plan Policy LP33, which concerns the conversion and replacement of buildings in the countryside. This assessment has been undertaken on the basis that the site is currently occupied by existing structures. However, the application clearly seeks permission in principle for the erection of a single self-build bungalow following the demolition of the existing double garage and stables.

13. The Council contends that it has not been demonstrated that the existing buildings on the site are redundant or disused and therefore argues that the proposal conflicts with Policy LP33. While this point is noted, a full assessment against all of the detailed criteria listed in Policy LP33 cannot be undertaken at the permission-in-principle stage, which is limited to matters of location, land use and the amount of development. I have also had regard to the appellant's evidence that, due to ill health, the dog-grooming and equestrian activities previously undertaken on the site have ceased. On this basis, I am satisfied that the buildings are redundant in the context of their previous use.

14. Significantly, I consider it reasonable to conclude that the buildings occupying the site are connected to the adjacent residential use at 2 Spring Cottages and as such can be considered domestic in character. This means that residential use of the site would not result in a wholesale change in the character of land use occurring on the site.

15. The Council also refers to Local Plan Policy LP12, which concerns design implementation, and states that the proposal, by virtue of being residential, cannot be accommodated on the site. However, given the scale of the site, its rural location, and the nature of the development currently occupying it, I am satisfied that a single dwelling could be accommodated without difficulty. The fact that the proposal is for residential development is not, in itself, a reason to conclude that the requirements of Policy LP12 cannot be met.

16. I have not been presented with any compelling evidence to indicate that the proposal would conflict with paragraph 135 of the Framework, which relates to achieving well-designed places. I am satisfied that the character of the surrounding area, including existing boundary treatments and associated screening, would allow a dwelling to be successfully integrated into the landscape subject to detailed design not a matter for consideration at this stage. I also find no conflict with paragraph 187, which seeks to protect and enhance the natural and local environment, nor with the National Design Guide (2021). These matters will, in any event, be addressed in greater detail at the technical details consent stage.

17. The suitability of the location for the proposed development has been challenged by the Council on the grounds of flood risk and as such the proposal being contrary to Policy LP 5. While the majority of the site lies within Flood Zone 1, the indicative access from Leighton Road is located within an area designated as Flood Zone 3. The Council's second reason for refusal asserts that the alternative access arrangement put forward by the appellant during the planning application stage would involve works outside the red-line application boundary. This alternative arrangement, suggested by the appellant, involved utilising an existing shared access with the adjacent 2 Spring Cottage.

18. Having considered the documentation submitted with the appeal, together with the Environment Agency's flood-mapping information, I am satisfied that there is a

reasonable possibility that an alternative access could be constructed from the public highway to the south-east of the indicative access point, in a location outside Flood Zone 3. The detailed design of such an access would appropriately be addressed at the technical details consent stage.

19. In this regard, I also note that neither the Environment Agency nor the Highway Authority raised any objection to the proposed development. I therefore do not consider this matter to present an impediment to the suitability of the site's location for the proposed development. The fundamental point is that a safe and policy-compliant access could potentially be provided to the site. This renders the Council's second reason for refusal on flood-risk grounds relating to site access unwarranted at the permission-in-principle stage.

20. In summary, I find conflict with the Local Plan with regard to the location of the proposed development, however I consider the degree of conflict relating to the proposed land use to be limited and the amount of development proposed to be acceptable at the permission-in-principle stage. Any necessary design-related considerations, including layout, scale, access and appearance, will be subject to detailed scrutiny during the technical details consent process.

Other Considerations

21. While a single dwelling would make only a limited contribution towards housing delivery, this must be viewed in the context of a significant district-wide shortfall. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with only a 3.94-year supply identified. I have also had regard to the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, as set out in paragraph 61 of the Framework. I therefore afford significant weight to this consideration.

22. The associated local economic benefits arising during both the construction and operational phases of the development would be modest, and I therefore attach neutral weight to this consideration.

Planning Balance

23. The Council accepts that paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged. As the appeal site does not lie within a protected area and does not involve an asset of particular importance as defined in footnote 7, paragraph 11(d)(ii) applies. Consequently, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is triggered. Under this presumption, the policies most important for determining the application are considered out-of-date, and planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when the Framework is read as a whole.

24. The development would provide an additional dwelling in a district where there is a recognised shortfall in housing land supply. This carries significant weight in favour of the proposal.

25. While there is conflict with Policies LP9 and LP10 of the Local Plan and there is some conflict with Framework with regard to the location of the proposal, the site's relationship to the settlement and surrounding cluster of development, the fact that the site is previously developed, together with the extent of the housing shortfall, reduces the weight afforded to this conflict. The proposal is otherwise capable of

being brought forward in a manner that would accord with the design and highways policies of the Local Plan and the Framework, subject to detailed matters to be considered at the technical details stage.

26. In summary, while I have identified some limited conflict with elements of the Framework relating to the location of development, the harms arising from this conflict are modest and do not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of delivering a new self-build dwelling in the context of the prevailing housing shortfall.

27. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal site is suitable for the proposed residential use at the permission-in-principle stage having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development. The matters identified by the Council do not amount to reasons to withhold permission in principle. Detailed considerations relating to access, design, layout and appearance are reserved for the subsequent technical details consent stage.

28. The adverse impacts of granting permission in principle would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole.

Conclusions

29. The proposal would not accord with the development plan but material considerations, particularly the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the Framework, outweigh this conflict. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and permission in principle granted.

F P Tinsley

INSPECTOR