

**MAIN CASE**

**Reference No:** 16/01249/OUT

**Proposal:** Detached single storey dwelling, garaging, parking, access and associated site works.

**Site Address:** Land Adj 20 Northfield Road Soham Cambridgeshire

**Applicant:** Alan White

**Case Officer:** Oli Haydon, Planning Officer

**Parish:** Soham

**Ward:** Soham North  
 Ward Councillor/s: Councillor James Palmer  
 Councillor Carol Sennitt

**Date Received:** 14 September 2016      **Expiry Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017

**[R253]**

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**1.0      RECOMMENDATION**

1.1      Members are requested to REFUSE this application for the following reasons:

1. The proposed dwelling is located within the countryside and, by virtue of its distance from the main settlement of Soham, is considered to be in an unsustainable location. The proposal does not promote sustainable forms of transport and the future residents of this additional dwelling will be reliant on motor vehicles in order to access any local services or facilities. The proposal does not meet any of the special circumstances as identified in Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposal fails to comply with the Policies GROWTH 5 and COM7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 and Paragraphs 14 and 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as it fails to promote sustainable development.

**2.0      SUMMARY OF APPLICATION**

2.1      Outline planning permission is being sought, with some matters reserved, for the erection of a new dwelling with an attached garage. Matters of access, layout and scale are to be considered as part of this application, however matters relating to appearance and landscaping are reserved.

2.2      The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>.

**Alternatively a paper copy is available to view at the East Cambridgeshire District Council offices, in the application file.**

2.3 This application has been called in to Planning Committee by Councillor James Palmer as it is viewed that Northfield Road is a fully sustainable location.

3.0 **PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 No relevant planning history.

4.0 **THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT**

4.1 The site is located outside of the established development framework for Soham, and as such is considered to be in a countryside location where development is tightly controlled. The site is in the corner of a paddock field adjacent to the agricultural buildings located on Crow Hall Farm. Crow Hall Farm is also the site of Alan's Ark pet supplies and Charlie's dog training centre.

4.2 The wider area comprises of agricultural and equine facilities large-scale farming operations and occasional residential development. The site is located 1.3 miles from the development boundary of Soham and a further 0.5 miles from the services and facilities of Soham.

5.0 **RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES**

5.1 Responses were received from the following consultees and these are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's web site.

Local Highways Authority - No objections in principal to this application as the development benefits from an existing metalled road with an existing junction with the public highway.

CCC Growth & Development - No Comments Received

Waste Strategy (ECDC) – No objections, subject to informatives.

Soham Parish Council – The Committee noted that development was again outside current development zone.

Ward Councillors – Councillor James Palmer took the view that this area of Soham Fen is fully sustainable.

Environmental Health – The EH officer has read the report undertaken by Cambridge Acoustics entitled 'Allans Ark, Northfield Road, Soham CB7 5UF Noise impact Assessment, Grain Dryer' dated January 2017. It is understood that the grain dryer is not in use for the majority of the year but when it is, it operates 24/7.

The EHO agrees that the layout of the proposed bungalow is beneficial for the reduction of noise impact, with additional windows to quieter facades for the bedrooms and the northern part of the building acting as a barrier for the immediate garden area. There are concerns regarding the more northern part of the garden

but as there is also external amenity space on the southern side of the development, which again will be shielded by the building, the EHO considers there is sufficient access to external amenity areas that will meet government noise guidelines.

Due to the potential impact of noise at night the acoustic consultants have recommended that the bedroom windows facing the direction of the dryer are fixed closed. As the bedrooms that these windows serve have alternative means of ventilation by way of additional openings on quieter facades, the EHO does not consider the windows necessarily require fixing closed. Occupants will be able to access alternative means of ventilation if the noise levels are such that they have to close the eastern aspect windows, and therefore they have a choice, however it is understood that you may consider this differently from a planning perspective.

It is also noted that the consultants have recommended specifications for acoustic ventilation in the windows etc and it is recommended that the systems utilised for window frame vents and through wall vents achieve at least this level of sound attenuation. If you consider it reasonable perhaps a condition requiring the specification of the sound attenuation of the vents to be agreed prior to use of the site could be applied.

- 5.2 Neighbours – A site notice was posted, an advert was placed in the Cambridge Evening News and one neighbouring property were notified and no responses were received.

## **6.0 The Planning Policy Context**

### **6.1 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015**

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
GROWTH 3	Infrastructure requirements
GROWTH 5	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 4	Energy efficiency and renewable energy in construction
ENV 7	Biodiversity and geology
ENV 8	Flood risk
COM 7	Transport impact
COM 8	Parking provision
ENV9	Pollution

### **6.2 Supplementary Planning Documents**

Design Guide  
Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations  
Flood and Water

### **6.3 National Planning Policy Framework 2012**

- 6 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- 7 Requiring good design
- 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

## **7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS**

**7.1** The main issues to consider when determining this application relate to the principle of development, the impacts upon character and appearance of the area, ecology, highway safety and residential amenity.

### **7.2 Principle of development**

**7.2.1** The application site lies outside of the defined development boundary. The development of the site for housing would, therefore, conflict with Policy GROWTH 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan which seeks to focus new housing development within defined settlement boundaries. However, as the council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year land supply for housing, policy GROWTH 2 cannot be considered up to date in so far as it relates to the supply of housing land.

**7.2.2** In this situation the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) means that permission for development should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed dwelling.

**7.2.3** Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that isolated new homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. This site is considered to be isolated from any built settlement, being 1.3 miles from the nearest settlement of Soham. The site is located in an isolated, rural location. It is therefore considered to be an unsustainable location for the erection of a new dwelling, similar to the conclusions of the Inspector in a recent appeal decision which forms a material consideration to be given significant weight in determining this application.

**7.2.4** The appeal decision bears similarities with this proposal and followed the refusal by the Planning Committee for two dwellings at 14 The Cotes, located 1.8 miles north of Soham, in an isolated cluster of dwellings. The proposed development site in this case is some 1.3 miles east of Soham and 2.1 miles from the centre of Soham where local shops and services are located.

**7.2.5** The recently received appeal decision for The Cotes in Soham (APP/V0510/W/16/3143840) cited the location as unsustainable due to the reliance on the car. The appeal stated that *“both (sites) would be reliant on the car to gain access to services and facilities. This would not accord with the Framework or the environmental dimension of sustainable development”* and *“the isolation of the sites from community facilities would weigh against the social dimension and would not accord with paragraph 55 of the Framework regarding the location of rural housing”*. Furthermore, the appeal also stated, *“given the distance of the sites from local facilities and the unsuitability of the road for pedestrian access, I conclude on this issue that the occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be highly reliant on the car to gain access to services and facilities”*. As previously stated, the Cotes is approximately 1.8 miles to the centre of Soham, and this application site is 1.3 miles

from the edge of Soham and 2.1 miles from the centre of Soham where local shops and services are located.

- 7.2.6 It is considered that the proposal is contrary to Local Plan policy COM7 which requires that development is designed to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and to promote sustainable forms of transport. This site is located over 2 miles from the centre of Soham and, as such, the Local Planning Authority view it as unsustainable as there are a number of sites within Soham which are in a more sustainable location and are either allocated for development or could be windfall sites. The proposal is located within the parish of one of the market towns where growth should be focused in a sustainable location in accordance with the inspector's decision.
- 7.2.7 This proposal differs from residential permissions granted in the small rural settlements in the District. This is due to the fact that encouraging growth at these rural sites will improve their sustainability and since they are presently reliant on nearby villages and reliant on the car already, the introduction of new dwellings ultimately helps their long-term sustainability and keeps these communities alive. The NPPF supports this by stating in paragraph 55 that development can support services in a village nearby and that isolated new homes in the countryside should be resisted unless there are special circumstances.
- 7.2.8 It should be noted that the plot size is deemed acceptable in line with the recommendations of the SPD Design Guide 2012.

### **7.3 Visual Amenity**

- 7.3.1 The area surrounding the application site is predominantly rural in nature, largely comprising agricultural fields. The application site is currently open paddock land adjacent to Crow Hall Farm. Crow Hall Farm contains a variety of uses alongside the main agricultural use; these include a dog training centre and pet supplies store. The surrounding landscape is one of open agricultural fields with occasional and small pockets of industrial and residential development.
- 7.3.2 The site is in a relatively prominent location on Northfield Road with a post and rail fence demarcating the paddock boundary. To the south of the site is a detached residential property and to the north-east are the dwellings associated with Northfield Farm and the Old Tiger Stables. The parcel of land between the Old Tiger Stables and Northfield Farm were subject to a pair of planning applications for two dwellings each (16/00788/FUL and 16/00580/OUT). The applications were refused by Planning Committee (2/11/2016) on the grounds of a harmful noise impact from the adjacent corn drying fans and inadequate highway visibility.
- 7.3.3 Policy ENV1 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 requires new development proposals to demonstrate that their location creates positive, complementary relationships with existing development and protects, conserves, and where possible enhances space between settlements and their wider landscape setting. Furthermore, Policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 requires all new development proposals to respect the landscape of the

surrounding area and ensure the location of buildings relates sympathetically to the surrounding area.

- 7.3.4 The proposed dwelling will be single-storey with a maximum width of 22m and a maximum depth of 14.5m. The proposal will have ample garden space with the proposed dwelling not occupying more than a third of the plot size, in line with the guidelines of the SPD Design Guide. It is considered that the proposed dwelling will not have an incongruous appearance within the street-scene and will be mostly obscured from view if adequate landscaping is implemented. The appearance of the dwelling will be considered at the reserved matters stage.
- 7.3.5 On balance it is considered that the proposed dwelling in this location would not have a significant and demonstrable impact on the rural character and appearance of the area. The visual impact of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable with regards to Policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 and Paragraphs 14, 17 and 56-68 of the NPPF.

#### **7.4 Residential Amenity**

- 7.4.1 Under Local Plan policy ENV2 this application should take care to ensure there is no significantly detrimental harm to the residential amenity of the occupier and neighbouring occupiers as a result of the proposal.
- 7.4.2 The proposed dwelling would be distanced sufficiently from any neighbouring residential properties such that no loss of amenity would occur from overlooking. The site also has sufficient space to accommodate the dwelling with an acceptable level of amenity as set out in the SPD Design Guide.
- 7.4.3 Following the conclusions reached for the aforementioned applications to the north (Section 7.3.2) consideration was made with regards to the impact of the nearby Northfield Farm (and the drying fans located adjacent to Northfield Road) on this proposal. Following the submission of a noise assessment, there was not considered to be a harmful impact arising from the proximity of the drying fans to the development site. The noise assessment concluded that the impact of the grain dryer systems on Northfield Farm would not be audibly intrusive on the residential use of the proposed dwelling. The Environmental Health department were satisfied with the findings of the acoustic assessment and accepted the mitigation measures proposed.
- 7.4.4 The proposal has implemented the recommended mitigation measures outlined in the acoustic survey which include provision of non-opening windows and a rearrangement of the internal floor plan. The EHO recommends a condition placed on any approval requiring details of the acoustic venting be submitted prior to occupation.

#### **7.5 Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 7.5.1 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and is not therefore considered to be at high risk of flooding. Any planning permission granted will be subject to a condition requiring a detailed drainage strategy to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

## **7.6 Trees**

7.6.1 The applicant has stated that there are no trees on the site that will be impacted upon as a result of the development.

## **7.7 Ecology**

7.7.1 The existing site consists of open paddock land that is unlikely to support protected species. To ensure the proposal results in the enhancement of the local biodiversity, a condition will be placed on any approval to ensure biodiversity enhancement measures are installed within the curtilage of the dwelling.

## **7.8 Highway Safety**

7.8.1 The application will utilise the existing access of Crow Hall Farm to access the development site. The Local Highways Authority have raised no objections to the scheme subject to necessary conditions.

7.8.2 The proposed garage and driveway will provide the two parking spaces necessary for residential dwellings, in line with Local Plan Policy COM8. Furthermore, there is sufficient manoeuvring space within the site to ensure vehicles can egress in a forward gear onto Northfield Road.

## **7.9 Planning Balance**

7.9.1 The proposal would provide the provision of an additional residential dwelling to the district's housing stock which would be built to modern, sustainable building standards. There would be the additional benefit of the positive contribution to the local and wider economy in the short term through construction work.

7.9.2 However, it is considered that these benefits would be outweighed by the significant and demonstrable harm which would be caused by the siting of an additional dwelling in an unsustainable location and increasing reliance on the car to gain access to services and facilities.

7.9.3 In conclusion, this proposal conflicts with Policies GROWTH5, ENV1, ENV2 and COM7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 and would counterbalance the recent conclusions of the Planning Inspectorate and Planning Committee.

## **8.0 APPENDICES**

8.1 No Appendices.

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<b><u>Background Documents</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Contact Officer(s)</u></b>
16/01249/OUT	Oli Haydon Room No. 011 The Grange Ely	Oli Haydon Planning Officer 01353 665555 oli.haydon@eastca

National Planning Policy Framework -

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 -

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Plan%20April%202015%20-%20front%20cover%20and%20inside%20front%20cover.pdf>