

Matter SC1, 1.5E Ickleton
Development Framework Boundary
Land to rear of The Old Vicarage
Martin Woodhead (20676)
Representation 56827

Local Plan Examinations

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

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STATEMENT

Background

My wife and I have lived in Ickleton for 45 years. We have three children and six grandchildren and have lived in our present house, The Old Vicarage, for 34 years. We are now aged 69 and 72 respectively and wish to build a new house for our old age in the garden of The Old Vicarage which will be environmentally friendly, unobtrusive and of architectural merit, using local materials such as flint and employing local craftsmen.

We wish to remain in Ickleton because our roots lie in the village – we have many local friends and the village is ideally suited to our needs, having a shop, post office, church, pub, social club, an hourly bus service to Cambridge and Saffron Walden during daytime, with Great Chesterford station and the M11 just a mile away, which we use frequently. We have a gas supply and excellent broadband. Ickleton is also equidistant from two of our children and their families, who live in Great Wilbraham and Manuden. Ickleton is classified as an Infill Village in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan but has all the facilities of villages such as Great Wilbraham or Whittlesford which are classified as Group Villages, except that Ickleton does not have a Primary School. We believe Ickleton is an appropriate village for our old age and is close to medical facilities in Sawston and Cambridge when required.

We have contributed to local activities over many years, my wife being Chair of Duxford School Governors for 10 years and also an Ickleton Parish Councillor from the mid-1970s for 8 years whilst I have had two book publishing businesses in and around Cambridge since 1972 employing many local people. I am now fully retired.

Matters and Issues for South Cambridgeshire Local Plan specific hearing sessions

I note that the Inspector has raised the following point under General Policy Issues which I would like to address:

1.1A Policy S/7: Development Frameworks

i. Is paragraph 2 of the policy too restrictive? Should it enable the redevelopment of redundant sites outside of a village development framework where it is demonstrated that there are clear benefits in planning terms?

Reason for requested change of development boundary

At present the Ickleton development framework boundary crosses the rear garden of The Old Vicarage. The house occupies one acre and the garden outside the boundary is another acre – this area of garden was used by our children for playing games in for many years but has been redundant since they left home. It contains a vegetable patch and is very secluded as a result of a high hedge on the western side and a thick copse of native species trees that we planted 30 years ago on the eastern side, behind which are the rear gardens of properties fronting onto Brookhampton Street. An open field is on the northern side and a fence / wall would be erected on the southern side. As there is easy vehicular and utility services access to this part of the garden from Butchers Hill, we believe it would make an ideal site for a proposed new sustainable house of approximately 270 square metres in size whilst enhancing the ecology through additional planting of native species.

We also believe our plans fit the needs expressed by the Government in its recent White Paper, published in February 2017, on Fixing the Broken Housing Market. This section relating to older people, we feel, sums up our situation well:

Chapter 4: Helping People Now

4.43 Helping older people to move at the right time and in the right way could also help their quality of life at the same time as freeing up more homes for other buyers. However there are many barriers to people moving out of family homes that they may have lived in for decades. There are costs, such as fees, and the moving process can be difficult. And they may have a strong emotional attachment to their home which means that where they are moving to needs to be very attractive to them and suitable for their needs over a twenty to thirty year period. There is also often a desire to be close to friends and family, so the issues are not straightforward.

*4.44 The Government is committed to exploring these issues further and finding sustainable solutions to any problems that come to light. To do this we will draw on the expertise of a wide range of stakeholders including housebuilders (both specialist and mainstream); mortgage lenders; clinical commissioning groups; housing associations and local authorities; and most importantly older people and the groups that represent them. We want to build on the evidence that already exists to help deliver outcomes that are best for older people. This conversation will generate a range of ideas for incentives and other innovations for the Government to consider: improved information and advice for older people about housing choices, including advice on adaptations; **supporting custom build for older people**; looking at how community living could work; as well as innovative models of housing with support available. These will sit alongside the Government commitments to fund and develop supported housing, including sheltered, step down and extra care housing, ensuring that the new supported housing funding model continues **to provide the means for older people to live independently for longer while relieving pressure on the adult social care system.***

Please note that I have placed some of the words above in **bold** as they apply specifically to our situation. As South Cambridgeshire is one of the Right to Build Vanguard Authorities, following Richard Bacon MP's recent Self-Build and Custom House Building Act that requires Councils to hold a register of people's interest in self / custom build, I have submitted our details to indicate our interest. The new house would also be designed so that one person could easily remain living in it when the other dies, thus relieving pressure on local social services.

Another advantage of amending the boundary would be the release of The Old Vicarage to, hopefully, a young family such as ourselves when we first moved in. It is a wonderful house in which to bring up a family but with seven bedrooms and being expensive to heat and maintain it is clearly no longer suitable for an elderly couple.

South Cambridgeshire's Local Plan

Our rationale for suggesting changing the boundary which crosses our rear garden contrasts with South Cambridgeshire's current Local Plan which states as follows:

Development Frameworks

2. Outside development frameworks, only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside or where supported by other policies in this plan will be permitted.

But this is against a background of the housing land supply in South Cambridgeshire being less than the Government's expectations of a minimum of five years, as reported recently:

South Cambridgeshire Annual Monitoring Report Covering the period 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016. Published December 2016.

2.40. Five year housing land supply: The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, mainly due to delays in the delivery of strategic sites during the recession, and to the fringe sites building out from the edge of Cambridge and them having only just started to deliver completions in South Cambridgeshire.

The current need for new houses can only be exacerbated by the number of new developments being proposed in South Cambridgeshire including an AgriTech Hub in Hinxton, Wellcome Genome Campus expansion plans (a doubling in staff from the current 2,500 people), an M11 motorway service station and hotel at Junction 10, 180,000 square feet of new industrial and office units adjacent to the Sawston bypass, and further expansion at Granta Park and the Babraham Research Park. All these are within four miles of Ickleton, and the new Astra Zeneca site is only 9 miles away.

This indicates that South Cambridgeshire should be doing everything it can to improve the local housing supply, and self build projects such as our proposed house have an important role to play in achieving this. As Gill Anderton, Housing Development Manager of the Greater Cambridgeshire Housing Development Agency said at a presentation recently, only 10% of new houses built in the UK are self / custom build (approximately 12,000 per year), the lowest in Europe, compared to 65% in Germany and 80% in Austria. Here is a link to her presentation:

https://www.scambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/self_build_presentation_for_nov_22nd_ga.pdf.

And Richard Bacon MP, who I met recently, said there are currently over 1m people in the UK wanting to build their own house over the next 12 months. He also gave Holland as an example where self build houses have doubled in the past 8 years and 15,000 are currently built per year, with a population of 15m. It seems we have a lot to learn from our European neighbours.

Conclusion

I hope that the rationale given for the boundary change around our property, our desire to build a sustainable new house for our old age, the current housing land supply being less than 5 years in South Cambridgeshire, together with the clear direction being given by the Government to increase the UK's housing supply, will result in an approval of our request.

Finally, a recent article in The Economist on the difficulties faced by older people in building homes for their retirement was well summed up by this cartoon:



Thank you for the opportunity of making this representation. My wife, Penny Woodhead, will be attending the hearing in my absence whilst cycling in France.

Martin Woodhead