



The Planning Inspectorate

An Executive Agency in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office

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Mr Robert Doughty
Chartered Town Planner and
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Your Ref: 165 6 JRB AKD

32 High Street
Helpringham
SPALDING
Lincs NG34 0RA

Our Ref:

SH/00/11/0000 DEPT.T/APP/A2525/A/92/213814/P5

RECEIVED

18 FEB 1993

Date:

16 FEB 93

Sir

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990, SECTION 78 AND SCHEDULE 6
APPEAL BY ASHWOOD HOMES
APPLICATION NO: H13/0738/92

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeal against the decision of South Holland District Council to refuse planning permission for residential development at Woodgate Road, Moulton Chapel. I conducted a Hearing into the appeal on 19 January 1993. At the Hearing an application for costs was made against the Council and that is the subject of a separate letter.
2. The small Fenlands village of Moulton Chapel is situated about 6 km to the south-east of Spalding. From the church located centrally at a cross-roads, and with other limited community facilities nearby, ribbons of single-depth housing radiate out along each of the 4 roads to form a cross-shaped settlement. The appeal site has a 40 m frontage to the southern limb and, though evidently once occupied by 2 dwellings, is now unused and overgrown with vegetation.
3. Though located some 500 m south of the cross-roads, beyond the majority of existing housing and largely surrounded by agricultural land, the site lies within the Interim Boundary of Development for Moulton Chapel. This was defined 13 years ago, without the benefit of public consultation, and cannot merit significant weight in my deliberations. Even so, the Council still recognise that boundary for development control purposes and the peripheral location did not feature as a reason for refusing this application. In recent times outline permissions for residential development have been granted on the appeal site, though these have now lapsed. With no material change in planning circumstances evident, and despite the firm rejection of ribbon development by Planning Policy Guidance 7, it is therefore inappropriate at this time for me to question the principle of residential use.



4. Policy 5a of the Lincolnshire Structure Plan Amendment No 2 accepts new residential development in and around most existing settlements but requires the suitability of any proposal to be assessed "in relation to its scale and impact on the character, density and physical extent of existing development". Consequently, from my inspection of the site and its surroundings and from the representations and evidence, I consider that the main issue for me to determine is whether, both in terms of character and appearance, the proposed development would blend satisfactorily into this rural setting.

5. In the early part of the Century, the southern part of the village appears to have contained only a scattering of dwellings, associated with individual smallholdings. Some of these remain and were supplemented between the Wars by a line of well spaced pairs of Council houses. More recently, many gaps nearer the cross-roads have been filled by closer packed houses and bungalows of suburban character. It was agreed that in general the resultant mixture of buildings along Woodgate Road is visually disappointing and lacking any distinctive rural identity.

6. Even so, the Council stressed the difference in character between the predominantly built-up northern section of the road and the more sparsely developed southern end. From my visits I too noted that, apart from the tightly arranged line of 6 new bungalows, starting 40 m north of the appeal site, the southern half comprises widely spaced Council housing, cottages, agricultural dwellings and smallholdings. Indeed, the more rural nature in the vicinity of the appeal site is emphasized not only by the significant agricultural breaks but also by the many trees and remaining lengths of native hedgerow which border the narrow road.

7. Of late the Council has become so concerned at the generally poor appearance of housing developments in South Holland that they have approved new Design Guidelines, which are intended for inclusion in the emerging District-wide Local Plan. Whilst these cannot yet be accorded much weight, I nevertheless consider they are a material factor in this appeal. The Council made it clear that in this instance they were not concerned about architectural details, choice of building materials, residential amenity or effects on the frontage sycamores, which are the subject of a Preservation Order. From the items listed in the Guidelines, I shall therefore concentrate my assessment on the contentious items, namely over-development, dwelling type and vehicular space.

8. Looking at these in turn, you claim that the layout would provide generous plots, with large front and rear gardens and adequate space between buildings. Yet, 2 of the plots would have rear gardens of no more than 10 m in length, much of the front gardens would be taken up by vehicular hardsurfacing and there would be only 2 m gaps between the units, with only a one metre gap to the northern boundary. Whilst accepting that

the retained trees and the proposed hedgerow planting would soften the impact to some degree, I believe that such closely spaced buildings would totally dominate the scene and provide an over-cramped appearance, in stark contrast to the existing relationship of buildings to spaces hereabouts. To suggest that the Council could relieve the visual impact by retaining gaps to either side of the appeal site is, to my mind, both unreasonable and impractical whilst the Interim Boundary of Development remains unchanged.

9. The absence of details for the previous outline approvals reduces the strength of your argument that acceptance of the proposed 3 units would result in no greater harm than has previously been sanctioned by the Authority. Neither, in my opinion, given the acknowledged unsuitability of the bungalow group to the north, is it appropriate to suggest as dense a development on a site nearer the settlement boundary. As the development limits are approached, I believe there should be a reduction in building densities, in order to allow open spaces and landscaping to combine to form a satisfactory transition from village to countryside. The abrupt termination of housing along Fen Gate provides ample proof of the unfortunate consequences of the contrary solution, especially when viewed across the flat, largely tree-bereft, Fenlands landscape.

10. As for dwelling type, you have produced at Appendix V a map showing development in Moulton Chapel of similar scale and character to that now proposed. You maintain that the latter would be compatible with the suburban styles already widely portrayed. Though the proposal comprises standard 3-bedroomed house types used widely throughout the country, you have toned down the detailing, varied the building line, provided a mixture of dwelling types and chosen identical building materials for all 3 units. Your clients believe this would produce a tasteful development with good marketing prospects.

11. Having studied the elevations, however, I do not consider that the 3 types relate well to each other, particularly when sited so close together. Also, in common with the Council, I am concerned at the awkward relationship between the bungalow and the 2 houses. Whilst variety is to be encouraged in large-scale developments in order to break up the monotony, I consider it would simply add to the discordant impact of this small scheme. Furthermore, I believe that the reliance on standard house types on a sensitive site such as this greatly reduces the chances of achieving a sympathetic solution.

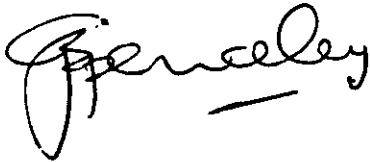
12. Finally, concerning car manoeuvring, you have explained that the provision of on-site turning facilities was requested by the Highway Authority. Similarly, the choice of a joint access to Plots 1 and 2 was to satisfy the wishes of planning officers for longer lengths of frontage hedgerow. You do not therefore consider it fair to blame your clients for putting forward a layout with such a high proportion of hardstanding in front of the dwellings. In your view, the traffic along Woodgate Road is insufficient to justify such provision.

13. Whilst noting your explanations, I nevertheless believe that the resulting layout of accesses and turning space would dominate the front gardens, reduce the opportunity for additional ameliorative landscaping and further emphasize the suburban nature of the proposed scheme.

14. I have taken into account all the other matters raised in the representations but find nothing of such weight as to override the considerations which have led to my conclusions. In short, I believe the proposal as presently designed would constitute over-development of this relatively small site. Moreover, its unquestionable suburban character would seriously conflict with existing development towards the southern end of Woodgate Road and be insensitive to the approach of open countryside. In consequence, I conclude that acceptance of the scheme would be contrary not only to Structure Plan Policy 5a but also to national Policy Guidance, which requires new housing in rural areas to respect the scale and character of its surroundings and be sympathetic to its countryside setting.

15. For the above reasons, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I hereby dismiss this appeal.

I am Sir
Your obedient Servant

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'G. Spenceley', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

G SPENCELEY BSc MPhil DipTP MRTPI
Inspector

FILE COPY

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Refusal of Planning Permission

Reference: H13/0738/92

Received: 07-JUL-92 Type: FULL

**Name: Ashwood Homes
Holbeach Manor
Fleet Road
Holbeach
Spalding Lincs PE12 7AX**

**Agent: Robert Doughty
32 High Street
Helpringham
Sleaford
Lincs NG34 0RA**

Description: Erection of two houses and one bungalow

**Location : Woodgate Road Moulton Chapel
Spalding Lincs**

**South Holland District Council hereby give notice that PERMISSION HAS
BEEN REFUSED for the development for the following reason(s):**

- 1 Notwithstanding that the proposed site lies within the Interim Boundary of Development for Moulton Chapel, the details of the development as proposed would, if permitted, result in an over-development of the site which would be out of character with that of the existing development and the adjoining countryside in that part of Moulton Chapel.**

**Director of Planning and Building Control Services
16-OCT-92 H13/0738/92**

This decision refers only to that required for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning Act and not for Building Regulations or any other legislation. See enclosed notes relating to rights of appeal.

SOUTH HOLLAND

DISTRICT COMMUNITY
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

APPEAL BY ASHWOOD HOMES

 Appeal Site

 Development
Boundary

B. SMITH M.R.T.P.I.
DISTRICT PLANNING OFFICER

PRIORY ROAD, SPALDING.

SCALE 1:2500

DATE OCT. '92

PLAN 'A'

