



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 April 2025

by K Townend BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/W/24/3354282

Broadways Farm, Newton Road, Drayton Parslow, Milton Keynes MK17 0JZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Grahame Williams against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/01458/APP.
 - The development proposed is change of use of an existing building from 'Agricultural Store' to 'Light Industrial' (use class E) including associated minor external alterations to the building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for change of use of an existing building from 'Agricultural Store' to 'Light Industrial' (use class E) including associated minor external alterations to the building, at Broadways Farm, Newton Road, Drayton Parslow, Milton Keynes MK17 0JZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/01458/APP subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site is located within the area covered by the Drayton Parslow Neighbourhood Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan). It was made in December 2024 following a local referendum and both main parties have included it in evidence. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I have therefore considered the Neighbourhood Plan alongside the other parts of the Development Plan in making my decision.
3. At the time of my site visit I saw that the appeal building is already in use as two business units. The appeal is, therefore, considered retrospectively.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the appeal site provides a suitable location for the development, with regard to the Council's spatial strategy.

Reasons

5. The appeal building is located outside any of the settlements identified in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013-2033. It is, therefore, for planning purposes within open countryside. The nearest settlement is Drayton Parslow which is identified in Policy S3 of the VALP as a smaller village which has limited services and facilities. Policy S3 advises that new development in the countryside should be avoided, especially where it would compromise the character of the countryside between settlements.

6. The appeal proposes the change of use of a former agricultural building for business use. The appellant has provided evidence, in the Supporting Letter and their Statement of Case, that the building is no longer required for agricultural use due to the changes to farming subsidy payments, the subsequent changes to what is being grown on the land associated with the farm, and the availability of other buildings within the wider site for the storage of hay, straw and agricultural machinery. Although the appeal building is a relatively new building, only having been approved through a planning application in 2020, that consent predated the changes to the subsidy payments. Consequently, at the time of that consent the farming enterprise needed the additional storage. However, since the changes to subsidies the building is no longer required for its original use.
7. Moreover, it is unlikely that the change of use of the appeal building to employment units would give rise to a future need for another building to fulfil the agricultural function of the appeal building. The appellant has clearly set out that the subsidies are no longer available to justify the need for additional storage of hay, straw or animal feed. I, therefore, find that, based on the evidence before me, the conversion of the appeal building complies with subsections b) and d) of Policy C1 of the VALP. The Council has not raised any issues with any other subsections of Policy C1 and, having considered the appeal before me, I have no reason to disagree.
8. The appellant is seeking to diversify the farm income by converting the building to employment units. Farm diversification schemes are supported through section c) of Policy D6 of the VALP. Diversification is also one of the exceptions to the constraint on development outside the settlement boundary set out in Policy DP6 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Even if I were to accept that the farming use on the wider site has reduced, through the introduction of equestrian and business uses, the proposed change of use would still constitute farm diversification.
9. Subsection d) also supports the appropriate re-use of an existing building, subject to design, context, location, and impact on surrounding area. The re-use of buildings under subsection d) does not need those buildings to fall within the definition of Previously Developed Land. The list of forms of employment development supported through Policy D6 is an open list and a proposal only needs to comply with one of the listed forms of development. As such, it is not necessary for the businesses using the appeal building to justify a rural location, as required by e) of Policy D6, as the appeal proposal would comply with D6c) and D6d).
10. The Council assert that the appeal site is not a sustainable location due to the reliance of the staff and customers on the use of the private car to access the site. I acknowledge that the site would not be within walking distance of Drayton Parslow, or any other settlement. Neither is it on a bus route. Nonetheless, the appeal site would be within a short drive, and it would be possible for people to cycle to the premises, even though formal cycle parking is not provided.
11. Although there would be a reliance on the private car the site is not located well-away from the settlement and utilities are already available. There are also existing vehicle movements associated with the equestrian uses already on the site and the use of the appeal building for two employment units would not result in a significant increase in vehicle movements. Moreover, the supporting text of Policy

D6 advises that re-use of buildings in urban or rural areas will be supported provided it is appropriate as per the conditions of the policy.

12. Policy S1 reflects the Framework's principle of sustainable development. However, it also seeks to provide for a mix of uses, especially employment, to facilitate flexible working practices so minimising the need to travel.
13. Policy S2 identifies a need of at least 27 hectares of employment land but does not appear to allocate any in the settlements. Policy S2 also advises that the primary focus of strategic levels of growth will be at the larger settlements, supported by development in the other large, medium, and smaller villages. The policy does not require a sequential assessment to be carried out and acknowledges that there will be growth in even the smaller villages.
14. Policy DP3 of the Neighbourhood Plan supports the reuse of traditional farm buildings. It does not advise on whether modern farm buildings are supported for conversion. Nevertheless, Policy DP3 does not define what a traditional building is.
15. The appeal site lies outside but close to Drayton Parslow and comprises existing buildings rather than new build development in the countryside. Overall, although the site is not accessible by means other than the private car or bicycle, it would not be a wholly unsustainable location. It lies close to the settlement and would allow for some reduction in the need to travel. Furthermore, the policies in the VALP and the Framework support the conversion of any agricultural building, irrespective of whether it is traditional or not and there is general support for re-use of existing buildings, including in rural areas, within the VALP.
16. Vehicle movements to and from the site, whilst on the local highway network, would be indistinguishable from other vehicle movements on the roads and I have no compelling evidence that the level of vehicle movements would be noticeably increased. The parking associated with the two business units in the appeal building is accommodated on existing hard standing around the building. The parking is predominately to the rear of the units and, therefore, due to existing boundary hedges and buildings, is not visually prominent in the landscape.
17. Moreover, the parking and vehicle movements would not be dissimilar to the equestrian use of other buildings within the wider site where horse owners arrive in private cars and park them near the stables. Although agricultural vehicles would be less urban in appearance, and also accessing the site from the surrounding fields, the parking and vehicle movements associated with the business use of the building would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on visual amenity, as required by Policy NE4 of the VALP.
18. For the above reasons, I find that the appeal site provides a suitable location for the development, with regard to the Council's spatial strategy. It complies with the requirements of Policy C1 in that all of the criteria are met, including, but not exclusively, the conversion of the building would not give rise to a future need for another building to fulfil the agricultural function of the building to be re-used and the redundant status of the building has been demonstrated. Furthermore, the appeal complies with Policies D6, NE4, S1, S2 and S3 of the VALP which, amongst other matters, support farm diversification and the re-use of existing buildings, support sustainable development, seek to provide employment development, minimise the need to travel, allow for development in the smaller villages, and seek to avoid new development in the countryside.

Other Matters

19. Both parties have provided evidence of local searches of available employment units. However, given my findings on the main issue the availability of other units is not determinative in this appeal.

Conditions

20. The Council has supplied a list of conditions that it suggests would be appropriate. I have considered these in light of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and made amendments and minor corrections where necessary to ensure clarity and compliance with the tests as set out in the Framework.
21. As the use of the building for employment use has already commenced, a condition relating to the time limit for implementation is not necessary. However, a condition detailing the approved plans is necessary to provide certainty. Nevertheless, I have not included a condition requiring all of the hard standing shown hatched to be retained for the purposes of parking as this area provides for more than the parking area associated with the appeal scheme and is, therefore, not wholly relevant to the development being permitted.
22. I have also imposed a condition requiring the use to remain within Class E of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended) and not to permit any change of use under the General Permitted Development Order 2015 to ensure that the appeal building continues to provide employment uses and no other uses, which may not be appropriate in this location.
23. In order to promote the use of electric vehicles and bicycles and to reduce carbon emissions I have included the conditions to require the installation of an EV charging point and cycle parking within three months of the date of this decision. However, given that the building is existing and there are no ecological implications resulting from the change of use, a condition to require the provision of bat and bird boxes is not necessary or relevant to the appeal scheme.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, and taking into account all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should succeed, and planning permission should be granted subject to the conditions set out below.

K Townsend

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: site location plan, site layout plan, proposed elevations, and proposed floor plan.
- 2) The premises shall only be used for Class E Uses of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and shall not be permitted to change to any use permitted under The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 or in any provision equivalent to any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification.
- 3) Within three months of the date of this decision one electric vehicle charging point shall have been provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The electric vehicle charging point shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be maintained for the lifetime of the development.
- 4) Within three months of the date of this decision facilities for the secure and covered storage of cycles shall have been provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and they shall, thereafter, be retained in perpetuity.

*** END OF CONDITIONS ***