



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 March 2025

by **B Astley-Serougi BA(Hons) LLM MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/24/3351305

Tarnagulla, 17 Monk Sherborne Road, Ramsdell RG26 5PR

- 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 W Gibson against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02644/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as conversion of barn to form a dwelling, with associated amenity space, car parking and other infrastructure.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024. The parties have been provided with the opportunity to comment on the implications of the revisions to their cases. I have taken account of the revised Framework, and any comments made, in my determination of the appeal as necessary.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is in a suitable location for the proposal having regard to local policy; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

Suitable Location

4. The appeal site is located between the two small communities of Charter Alley and Ramsdell. The existing residential dwelling known as Tarnagulla is sited to the front of the metal barn which is the subject of this appeal. A public right of way abuts the eastern boundary of the site where there are also several mature trees along the boundary. The site is bordered by hedging with agricultural land to the north, east and west. The appeal barn is currently being used for storage of both commercial and residential items.
5. Policy SS1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 (BDLP) is a spatial strategy policy and the appeal site is considered to be located within the

countryside for planning purposes. Policy SS6 of the BDLP seeks to direct development to existing settlements.

6. The description of development states that the proposed development is for the *conversion* [my emphasis] of the existing barn. Consequently, Policy SS6(c) is relevant and permits new housing in the countryside where it includes the re-use of a redundant or disused permanent building subject to further criterion.
7. Given that the appeal barn is being used for storage it follows that it cannot be deemed to be redundant or disused. Additionally, there is limited substantive evidence before me to suggest that the barn is no longer required. Furthermore, Policy SS6(c) does not refer specifically to the use of buildings. Instead it focuses upon whether the building itself can be classed as redundant or disused. Consequently, irrespective of the previous agricultural use of the barn ending, the existing use of the barn for storage results in the appeal scheme conflicting with Policy SS6(c).
8. Nevertheless, even if the barn did comply with Policy SS6(c) it would still have to comply with criterion iv-vi of the Policy. Criterion iv requires that a development would not require substantial rebuilding, extension or alteration. The appellant has provided a structural report dated June 2023. It states that the steel frame of the barn is very basic and therefore it would be necessary to add bracing. Also, a replacement of the cladding would possibly reduce loads on the frame and that due to cracks in the internal blockwork lining walls movement joints would need to be added to prevent further cracking.
9. The conclusion states that the frame generally has adequate strength to provide support for a suitable weatherproof enclosure for a residential dwelling. However, there is no reference to loading from windows and doors and no detailed investigation of the ground slab. Whilst the appellant considers that the structural engineer would have considered these in drawing their conclusions, it is not adequately demonstrated in the report. Consequently, the appellant has failed to adequately demonstrate that the appeal scheme would not require a substantial rebuild of the appeal barn.
10. The appellant refers to the Council having not sought a qualified specialist to assess the structural report. However, the onus is on the appellant to provide adequate detailed information to demonstrate that the appeal barn is suitable to be converted and as identified above, this has not been evidenced in this case.
11. Criteria v requires that there would be no requirement for another building to fulfil the function of the appeal barn. Given that the barn is currently being used for storage the appellant has not adequately demonstrated that there would not be a need for another building to perform this function. Therefore, this criteria would not be met.
12. Criteria vi of Policy SS6(c) requires that if both iv and v are met, then the development should lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting. Given that the second main issue is regarding the character and appearance of the surrounding area I have dealt with this matter below so as to avoid repetition. However, it will be seen that I find the appeal scheme to not result in harm to the immediate setting of the development and that it would enhance the relationship between the existing metal barn and Tarnagulla. Nevertheless, it would remain in conflict with Policy SS6(c) as a whole for the reasons I have identified above.

13. The appellant considers that the appeal scheme could also be assessed under Policy SS6(a) which pertains to the re-development of previously developed land (PDL). Given that the appellant applied specifically for the conversion of the appeal barn as per the description of development on the original application, Policy SS6(a) is not relevant.
14. An appeal decision at Charter Alley, Tadely¹ has been cited by the appellant in which the Inspector found the appeal site to be a suitable settlement for development. Charter Alley is near to the appeal site before me. I do not have the full details of the appeal scheme at Charter Alley and consequently I cannot be sure that it is wholly comparable to the proposal before me. Nevertheless, the decision at Charter Alley was for permission in principle for four to nine dwellings. Consequently, it did not involve the conversion of an existing building and was therefore assessed against a different part of policy SS6: SS6(e). Moreover, the decision was not assessed against the current iteration of the Framework and each application is determined on its own merits.
15. Given the above, the appeal site would not be a suitable location for the appeal scheme. Therefore, it would conflict with Policies SS1 and SS6(c) insofar as it seeks to restrict development in the countryside so as to maintain the existing open nature of the Borough's countryside.
16. It would therefore also fail to accord with the aims of WSL5 of the Wootton St Lawrence Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2029 (the NP) insofar as it establishes support for the criterion outline in Policy SS6(c).

Character and appearance

17. The appeal site is located within the North Sherborne Landscape Character Area (NSLCA). It is characterised by a patchwork of mixed farmland and woodland. It is generally a balanced landscape with a low-lying and gently undulating landform. The Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Character Assessment 2021 (BDCLA) states that a key characteristic of the NSLCA is a settlement pattern dominated by small villages such as Charter Alley, hamlets, isolated farmsteads and individual properties distributed throughout the rural landscape.
18. The appeal barn is located behind Tarnagulla and is adjacent to its garden. There is an existing lawful use of the site for car storage². The site is bordered by low-lying agricultural land to the north, east and west and consequently the surrounding area has a relatively rural character. The barn is adjacent to Tarnagulla and results in a close relationship between the two. Especially, given that the rear amenity space of Tarnagulla is large and borders a proportion of the appeal barn. The likely introduction of residential paraphernalia associated with the appeal scheme would not result in harm to the overall character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area given that the appeal site is already relatively domesticated in nature.
19. The appeal scheme would convert the existing barn which would remain the same in terms of scale. Whilst its current scale results in views of the barn from the aforementioned public right of way and wider area, it is not sited in an overly prominent position due to the setback from the public highway.

¹ Planning Appeal Decision: APP/H1705/W/20/3261247

² Certificate of Lawfulness Ref: BD/69559

20. A previous appeal decision at the site has been cited³ in which the Inspector found that the previous appeal scheme would fail to integrate successfully with the existing pattern of development and consequently would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. Nevertheless, the previous appeal scheme was for two dwellings to replace the existing barn. Therefore, the proposed development before me is materially different given that it would convert the existing barn rather than demolish it.
21. Moreover, the Inspector also stated that the appeal barn before me is typical of its countryside location. This is echoed by the Officer Report for the appeal scheme before me which states that the barn in its current form is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. Therefore, it follows, that whilst there would be some relatively minor domestic features such as windows and doors added to the barn itself, these would not result in an unacceptable and incongruous suburban character to the barn. Thus, it would not result in harm to the overall character of the barn and surrounding area.
22. The Council also refers to the open character of the appeal site stating that except for the barn and Tarnagulla, it adds to the overall rural landscape of the area and enables far reaching views across the aforementioned agricultural fields. I have identified above that the domestic additions would be minor in scale, that there exists a level of domestication of the overall site and that the appeal scheme would convert the existing barn. It follows that the far-reaching views would remain intact along with the overall rural landscape of the area. Thus, the appeal scheme would not result in an unreasonable extension of residential built development into an open landscape
23. Finally, the Council refer to the proposed development constituting backland development and consequently that given the appeal site is bounded by fields rather than other dwellings, the appeal scheme would result in residential development within the open countryside. I acknowledge that the appeal site is indeed relatively isolated from other residential dwellings, however as per the BDLCA, individual properties distributed throughout the rural landscape is a prominent characteristic of the area. Furthermore, I have identified above that the overall appeal site including the relationship of the existing barn with Tarnagulla results in a relatively domesticated character.
24. Given all of the above, the appeal scheme would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore comply with Policies EM1, EM10 and SS6(c)(vi) of the BDLP and accord with the aims of the Wootton St Lawrence Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2029 insofar as they seek to ensure development is of a high design quality and assimilates with the surrounding area including the character or visual amenity of the landscape.
25. It would also accord with the aims of the Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document 2018 and the Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document 2018 insofar as they seek to ensure developments respond to their context including the local landscape.

³ Planning Appeal Decision: APP/H1705/W/22/3302589

Other Matters

26. The Council has stated that they are able to demonstrate a housing land supply of 2.94 years according to a revised calculation undertaken as a consequence of the revised Framework. The appellant has referred to the Council's appeal statement for a different site in which the housing land supply figure was considered to be 2.78 years as a consequence of an appeal decision at Sherfield Road⁴. Both are below the housing land supply the Council is expected to deliver in line with the Framework. The proposal would deliver one unit and boost the housing stock in circumstances where there is a shortfall.
27. A fall-back position has been cited relating to the permitted development right to convert agricultural buildings to dwellings. However, there is limited substantive evidence before me to demonstrate how this would be achieved. Consequently, the fall-back position attracts very limited weight.
28. The appellant indicates concerns regarding the order in which the Council assessed the application. This is a matter between the parties. I have determined this appeal on the evidence before me. Additionally, the Council has confirmed that the reference to 'outline' in its statement of case was a typographical error and that the application was assessed as a full planning application.
29. A lack of harm regarding the living conditions of neighbouring occupants and any future occupants as well as the effect upon highways. A lack of harm is a neutral factor in my determination of this appeal.

Planning Balance

30. In the appellants statement of case, reference is made to a planning appeal decision⁵ and consequent high court judgement⁶ in relation to the application of footnote 7 paragraph 11(d).
31. Paragraph 232 of the Framework makes it clear that due weight should be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. Development in rural areas is not precluded but the Framework indicates that great weight should be given to the benefits of using suitable sites within settlements for homes and therefore supports the general thrust of the BDLP in terms of location of housing. Therefore, the conflict between the proposal and Policies SS1 and SS6(c) should be given significant weight in this appeal.
32. As there are no policies in the BDLP which positively favour development of this kind in this location and as the proposal would be contrary to the policies referred to above, there would be a conflict with the development plan as a whole.
33. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, because of the provisions of footnote 7, paragraph 11 d) ii of the Framework should be applied. In these circumstances footnote 7 of the Framework establishes that the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date. Consequently, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the

⁴ Planning Appeal Decision: APP/H1705/W/24/3350575

⁵ Planning Appeal Decision Ref: APP/H1705/W/23/3326191

⁶ High Court of Justice Neutral Citation Number: [2024] EWHC 1916 (Admin)

benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. The site is not within a protected area.

34. The appeal scheme would result in one dwelling in a Borough that is falling below the level of housing supply required by national policy. It would make a modest contribution as indicated by paragraph 73 of the Framework, it would also provide modest economic benefits from construction jobs including the supply chain as well as a modest increase in the use of local services and facilities by future occupants. The appellant also claims that there would be a social benefit as a result of the scheme because it would help to maintain the viability of the rural community.
35. The appellant's claimed benefits associated with a single dwelling would be limited even taking account of the objective of boosting the supply of housing in the Framework and the Council's housing land supply position.
36. Consequently, the adverse impacts on the housing strategy would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

37. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

B Astley-Serougi

INSPECTOR