
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 June 2025

by **H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/25/3362942

Manor Farm Yard, Upton Grey Road, Upton Grey, Hampshire RG25 2RQ

- 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 Mrs Andrea Janaway (JG Janaway & Sons) against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/03050/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of 1 no building with 4 no commercial units.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published in December 2024 after the Council made its decision. I have had regard to the revised Framework in reaching my decision.

Main Issues

3. The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area, having particular regard to the effect upon and thereby the significance of the Upton Grey Conservation Area; and
4. the effect of the proposal on the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

Character and appearance, including the CA

5. The appeal site comprises a parcel of undeveloped land that has an open grassy appearance whilst being bound by established planting on its roadside boundary. The site sits to the front of Manor Farm Yard, a complex of former farm buildings which has diversified over the years. It now offers a variety of business units for commercial use in both new and converted buildings. Despite the presence of these buildings and some nearby residential development, the area has a green, spacious and rural character and appearance.
6. The appeal site is located within the Upton Grey Conservation Area (CA). Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, to which I have attached considerable importance and weight.

7. The Council's Conservation Area Appraisal for Upton Grey (adopted 2003), states that the special interest of the Upton Grey Conservation Area is derived from the intrinsic individual quality of its historic buildings. Many of these are situated in key landmark positions within the streetscape, and have an integral relationship with a series of varied and distinctive character. The undulating topography is a key element in enhancing the visual interest of the settlement giving varied and contrasting views both in, and out of, the CA. Its historic character is principally residential. However, the presence of both countryside and parkland within the CA, and the longer views to open farmland, creates a strong semi-rural quality. The combination of these elements creates an area of particular special interest.
8. The Conservation Area Appraisal (2003) also states that the open spaces within the CA are key determinants of the character of the village of Upton Grey. Both the former Lodge Farm and Manor Farm retain their original context within large and formal open spaces to the north and south-east respectively. These open areas of the latter allow extensive vistas throughout the valley and the surrounding countryside.
9. Therefore, I find that the CA is characterised, in part, by its traditional built form, its tranquil rural setting, and its hedge lined lanes and open areas, which accentuates its rural character. The Manor House and St Mary's Church are at the core of the village and the CA.
10. The site is located opposite the former grain store, which has been subdivided and is now used by various commercial enterprises. The appeal site slopes gently down from Upton Grey Road but is at a higher level than the ground where the former grain store is sited.
11. The proposed building would be built into the grassed bank area positioned opposite the former grain store. The appellant indicates that its floor level would be the same as the converted former grain store, and only the upper part of the proposed building would be seen.
12. Whilst part of the rear elevation would be screened by the bank, its upper sections and profiled metal roof form would be exposed and would have the scale and appearance of a solid structure. There would also be an unnatural drop in levels at the edges of the proposed building. This, together with its pitched roof form and exposed edges, would give it an artificial and engineered form and bulk that would be obvious and significantly different to what is on site now.
13. Furthermore, the proposal's footprint would cover a large area, adding to its substantial scale and notably reducing the green buffer the site creates between the road and the Manor Farm buildings. Also, it is likely the changes to the natural landform to construct the development would be noticed. Excavating into the bank would disrupt the natural topography, undermining the site's open and undeveloped qualities that contribute to the rural landscape and the CA.
14. Despite being positioned opposite the former grain store, the proposed building would not be perceived as part of the existing cluster of buildings. Its sunken form, cut into the bank, would contrast sharply with the established built context and appear visually separate. Set against the backdrop of open countryside, it would stand out as a prominent and incongruous feature in the rural landscape.

15. Additionally, the formation of the proposal's parking area would introduce hard, urban elements. These would be at odds with the soft appearance of the site. The proposal would also result in parked vehicles in front of the units, which would further diminish the site's rural qualities.
16. Therefore, the presence of the proposed building, together with the associated hardstanding materials, would erode the undeveloped character of the site, which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and to the CA as a whole.
17. Although existing vegetation is present along the site's boundaries and additional landscaping is proposed on the remaining land, I saw that there would be close-range views of the proposed development from the site access points. Parts of the rear and side elevations, including the roof, would be visible from the site entrances. In addition, there would be glimpses of it from Upton Grey Road, particularly when vegetation is not in leaf. There would also be views from nearby properties.
18. For the reasons given, the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area and to the significance and special interest of the Upton Grey Conservation Area.

Listed Buildings

19. The listed buildings situated closest to the appeal site are Rose Cottage and Old Manor Cottage (both Grade II listed), and to the south is the Grade II listed Manor House and its important Grade II* listed garden. The significance and special interest of these heritage assets is derived, in part, from their age, relevance to the historic evolution and rural history of the village, and their historic building fabric and attractive aesthetic appearances. This significance and special interest are further underpinned by the spaciousness and openness of their rural setting, which is contributed to in no small part by the appeal site.
20. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.
21. The appeal site's undeveloped state is a significant component of the immediate or wider setting of these heritage assets, and there is no substantial evidence before me to suggest that it does not contribute to their significance. As explained above, the proposal's location combined with its scale and form, would result in a prominent and incongruous development. This would result in harm to the immediate or wider setting of these designated heritage assets.
22. Although boundary hedging would be retained and further landscaping could be conditioned, such planting cannot be relied upon to conceal the proposed development for perpetuity.
23. Consequently, the proposal would cause harm to the significance and special interest of these designated heritage assets by bringing forward development within their settings.

Planning benefits and balance

24. With reference to paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent and fairly localised nature of the proposal, I find that the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets assessed above would be 'less than substantial' but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 215 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
25. The proposal would create construction employment in the short-term, and in the longer term would lead to employment opportunities and support for businesses in the form of 4 units. There would also be expenditure into the local economy and the scheme would introduce some biodiversity enhancements.
26. The appellant also states that the proposal would support the further diversification of an existing farming enterprise, make efficient use of land, and would support the growth of the rural economy.
27. However, I am not persuaded that the only way of securing the benefits identified would be via the appeal proposal. No compelling evidence is before me which confirms that the proposal is the only viable option or that the future of the existing farming enterprise would be at risk if the appeal was to fail, and the proposed development was not implemented. In these respects, the identified harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets has not been clearly and convincingly justified as required by paragraph 213 of the Framework.
28. Accordingly, giving great weight to the conservation of these designated heritage assets, I consider that the less than substantial harm I have identified would not be outweighed by the scheme's public benefits when considered cumulatively.
29. For the reasons given, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the nearby listed buildings. The proposal would also fail to preserve or enhance the Upton Grey Conservation Area, with associated harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the provisions within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. It would also conflict with Policies EP4, EM1, EM10, and EM11, of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029), adopted 2016. Collectively, these policies amongst other things, seek to ensure development is well designed, positively contributes to the local character and distinctiveness of an area, and conserves or enhances the quality of the borough's heritage assets.

Other Matters

30. My attention has been drawn to a previous application (ref: 21/01181/FUL) which considered a new building in the mix of the older structures at Manor Farm Yard. Whilst the Council concluded that this previous proposed development would not be harmful to local character or heritage assets, it differs to the proposal before me which is sited on undeveloped land to the front of the farm development. In any event, I have dealt with this appeal on its own merits.
31. The appellant refers to a number of non-designated heritage assets. However, the Council have not made reference to these assets in its submitted evidence, and

they were not referred to as a reason for refusal. As I am dismissing the appeal, I have not found it necessary to consider this matter further.

32. Letters of objection have been received. In addition to matters I have addressed above, the letters of objection raised concern including traffic generation and noise pollution. These factors are not in dispute between the main parties and were addressed in the Officer's Report, with the Council concluding that there would be no material harm in these regards. No substantiated evidence has been submitted that leads me to any different view.

Conclusion

33. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR