



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2025

by **U P Han BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/W/25/3361101

Grange Farm, Hollies Lane, Pattingham, Wolverhampton WV6 7HJ

- 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 Nadeem Ahmad against the decision of South Staffordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00995/FUL.
 - The development proposed is conversion of redundant barn into 1 no. residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The agent acting for the appellant has declared that they are a non-salaried planning inspector. I can confirm that I do not know the person as an agent or inspector. My determination of this appeal has been made without prejudice to all parties.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework);
 - whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt including its effect on openness and the purposes of including land within it, having regard to the Framework and the development plan; and
 - if the development is inappropriate, whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Location

4. Policy CP1 of the South Staffordshire Council Core Strategy (December 2012) (the CS) sets out the spatial strategy for South Staffordshire, directing development to the most accessible and sustainable locations in accordance with the settlement

hierarchy. Outside of the service villages, the policy indicates that development will be restricted to particular types of development to meet affordable housing needs, tourism, provide for sport and recreation and support the local rural economy and rural diversification. The proposal does not fall into any of these categories.

5. The appeal site is located approximately 1.3 miles from the Local Service Village of Pattingham and is physically separated from this settlement. There are no day-to-day services and facilities, including public transport links within easy walking distance of the appeal site. Walking or cycling to Pattingham, where there are a range of services and facilities, would require future occupiers of the proposed dwelling to travel along roads that are largely unlit and with no footpath. Consequently, future occupiers of the proposed dwelling would likely rely on private car transport to access local services and facilities.
6. The main parties agree that the proposal would constitute the development of an isolated home in the countryside. While the appeal site is within a small cluster of residential dwellings, it would remain isolated from day-to-day services and facilities. I therefore agree that the proposal would constitute the development of an isolated home in the countryside. Paragraph 84 of the Framework indicates that these should be avoided unless one or more of the circumstances listed apply. This includes development that would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.
7. The main parties agree that the proposed development would re-use a redundant or disused building but disagree as to whether its immediate setting would be enhanced.
8. The appellant contends that the proposal would result in the removal of a partly collapsed structure on the one side of the building, as well as the removal of containers on the site, thus enhancing the building's setting. However, I did not see such a structure or containers during my site visit. Therefore, based on my site observations, I do not find this argument is supported.
9. It has also been put to me that the building's setting would be enhanced by the replacement of existing hardstanding with soft landscaping. However, the submitted plans show that the majority of the hardstanding would be retained for the parking of vehicles. Furthermore, limited landscaping details have been provided. As such, the above factors cannot be fairly asserted to materially enhance the building's immediate setting.
10. While the proposed alterations would retain the rural character of the building and somewhat improve its general appearance through replacement of the existing asbestos roof with a tiled roof and cladding of the blockwork walls with reclaimed facing brickwork, the proposal would largely maintain the current relationship between the building and its surroundings without significantly altering how the site is experienced as a whole. As such, I consider the proposal's overall impact on the immediate setting of the building would be neutral.
11. The appellant contends that the proposal would benefit the setting of a nearby listed building known as Grange Farm. However, given that I consider the proposal would have a neutral effect on the building's immediate setting, its potential to have a benefit on the setting of Grange Farm, particularly given the location and design of the appeal scheme, would be limited.

12. Even if the proposal complied with paragraph 84 c) of the Framework, this alone does not justify the acceptance of new development in the countryside nor render Policy CP1 of the CS inapplicable. The proposal would nevertheless result in a dwelling that would be a considerable distance from local services and facilities with poor pedestrian and cycle connections to them. As such, future occupiers would be heavily reliant on private vehicles for access to local services and facilities.
13. The appellant has drawn my attention to permission granted for residential conversion of the appeal building under 14/00783/FUL. However, I note that the proposal was not assessed against Policy CP1 of the CS. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
14. For the reasons given, the site is not in a suitable location for the proposed development. There is conflict with Core Policy CP1 of the CS and the Framework.

Whether inappropriate development

15. The appeal site relates to a former agricultural building located in the Green Belt. The building is single storey with a concrete frame, brick and blockwork walls and a dual pitched sheet cladded roof. The proposal seeks to convert the building into one residential dwelling.
16. Policy GB1 of the CS broadly reflects the Framework in terms of resisting development in the Green Belt except in certain circumstances. The Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It goes on to establish that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the specified exceptions applies. This includes, under paragraph 154 h) iv), the re-use of buildings provided they are of permanent and substantial construction and preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. As such, paragraph 154 h) iv) of the Framework sets tests which must be satisfied before the development can be regarded as not inappropriate.
17. Furthermore, amongst other matters, Policy EV6 of the CS requires proposals for the re-use of redundant rural buildings to demonstrate that the building is in a condition capable of conversion without demolition and rebuilding, or substantial construction.
18. I am advised that a 2017 SA Structural Appraisal (the 2017 SA), relating to a previous proposal, found the building not suitable for conversion. However, while the 2017 SA suggests that the foundations sit in soft, wet, sandy/ clay strata, there is no substantive evidence before to support this claim. The concrete floor slab was in good condition, and I saw no obvious signs of settlement, random cracking, unevenness or exposure of the foundation base during my site visit.
19. Furthermore, it has been drawn to my attention that the previous proposal would have doubled the roof load while the submitted Structural Analysis and Report and the Design and Access and Conservation Statement (prepared in consultation with a structural engineer) indicate that the proposal can be designed to introduce no significant additional loads through the use of lightweight materials. As such, I am satisfied that the existing structure would be able to support the loading associated with the conversion.

20. Contrary to the 2017 SA report, I found no visible evidence that the side walls have rotated outwards. The blockwork walls appeared structurally stable and exhibited no outward displacement. As a result, I remain unconvinced that any significant rotation has occurred without further technical assessment or supporting evidence.
21. The Structural Analysis and Report clearly outlines the works that would be required to convert the appeal building into a dwelling. Overall, it concludes that the existing structure is capable of conversion without significant demolition or reconstruction.
22. On the basis of the evidence before me and my own site observations, the appeal building is of permanent and substantial construction. Notwithstanding this, paragraph 154 h) requires that such development preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
23. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial and visual aspects. The appeal building already exists. The proposal includes a small single storey lean to side extension to the existing building for a utility room. Given its modest scale, limited height, and discreet siting, the proposed extension would have minimal spatial and visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Accordingly, openness of the Green Belt would be preserved.
24. I am also satisfied that the proposal would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt as outlined in Paragraph 143 of the Framework, as the building is already in situ and the scale of the proposed extension is very modest. Furthermore, the Council raised no objection in this regard.
25. For the reasons given, the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Accordingly, it complies with Policies GB1 and EV6 of the CS and the Framework.

Other Matters

26. The appeal site is proximate to the Grade II listed building Grange Farm. While not related to a reason for refusal, I must, in light of my duties under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation areas) Act 1990 (as amended) have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
27. Given the separation distance, the presence of intervening buildings, and the modest external alterations proposed to the building, the scheme would preserve the setting of Grange Farm, the significance of which would not be harmed. Furthermore, the Council raised no concerns regarding the listed building, and I see no grounds to find otherwise.

Planning Balance

28. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites with only 1.17 years supply. In this circumstance, while paragraph 11 d) i) does not apply, paragraph 11 d) ii) of the Framework is engaged and permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Footnote 9 of the Framework sets out the specific policies referred to in paragraph 11 d) ii).

29. In assessing the proposal against the policies in the Framework as a whole and the policies referred to in Footnote 9, I find that the proposal would conflict with paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework. This is because the appeal site is not in a sustainable location offering a genuine choice of transport modes, and thereby likely to increase private car transport. This is a serious shortcoming of the proposal, and I attach significant weight to the conflict with the relevant Framework policies.
30. The site is not in a suitable location for the proposed development due to its poor accessibility to day-to-day services and facilities. The proposal would dilute the overall spatial development strategy for the Borough, contrary to the expectations of the Framework which indicates that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. The conflict with the relevant development plan policies is a matter that weighs heavily against the proposal.
31. On the other hand, the proposal would deliver one additional house, contributing to the housing supply and supporting the Framework's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. However, given the small scale of the development, the benefits would be modest and carry moderate weight in the planning balance.
32. Taking all matters into account, the adverse impacts of the proposal 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

33. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and material considerations, including the Framework and the stated benefits, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with the development plan.

U P Han

INSPECTOR