



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2025

by **O Marigold BSc DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/25/3363805

Longview, Chalbury, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 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 F Schwyn against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/FUL/2024/04380.
 - The development proposed is demolition of a barn and the erection of a dwelling (self-build project).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies, including the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt,
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, which lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs National Landscape,
 - whether the proposal should make provision for Biodiversity Net Gain, and
 - whether the proposal would accord with the settlement strategy of the Development Plan.

Reasons

Green Belt

3. The site consists of a barn, located amongst a group of buildings including the house at Longview. The proposal seeks to demolish the barn, and to erect a new dwelling. The site lies within the South East Dorset Green Belt. Paragraph 153 of the Framework makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. In respect of this issue, no conflict is identified with Development Plan policy, and so I have assessed the proposal against the Framework.
4. Framework Paragraph 154 makes clear that new development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless an exception applies. One such exception is at Framework

paragraph 154(g), which permits the redevelopment of Previously Developed Land (PDL), if it would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

5. As applicable here, the Framework Glossary defines PDL as land which has been lawfully developed and is occupied by a permanent structure, but excluding land that is or was last occupied by agricultural buildings. The Council has assessed the existing building as having an agricultural use. However, the appellant has submitted a Statutory Declaration, stating that no agricultural activity has taken place since 2008, if not earlier. It further states that the building subject to this appeal has only subsequently been used for domestic storage.
6. No Certificate of Lawfulness for the use of the building for ancillary residential use is before me. Nevertheless, I see little reason to doubt the authenticity of the Statutory Declaration. Consequently, on the evidence before me, the site constitutes PDL. The replacement building would have a scale and floorspace no larger than the existing building.
7. As a new dwelling, the proposal would increase the intensity of residential activity and vehicles to the site. That said, as a single new property, such movements and their spatial and visual effects would be small. A section of new track is proposed but would be minor in nature. These aspects would not therefore amount to substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
8. On this basis, the proposal would benefit from Framework paragraph 154(g) and would not constitute inappropriate development. Indeed, the reduction in the length of the building would result in a minor benefit to Green Belt openness, to which I give moderate positive weight.

Character and Appearance

9. The appeal site is located within countryside, separated by open fields from dwellings and buildings other than those associated with Longview. Given the remote location of the site, Framework paragraph 84 applies. This seeks to avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside. An exception is made under paragraph 84(c) for building re-use, but this does not apply here as the scheme is for new build.
10. Another exception is under Framework paragraph 84(e), which applies if the design of the dwelling is of exceptional quality and truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and raising general design standards in rural areas. It must also significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
11. The proposal is intended to have the design and appearance of a rural building, whilst recognising the variety of built form locally and within the National Landscape. In having a reduced length to the barn that it would replace, the proposal would respond to a concern raised in the Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan 2019-2024, that buildings are generally becoming larger.
12. The proposed building would have a large bulk and scale, comparable to the current barn, as well as similar ridge and eaves heights. Big, functional barns are an expected feature of the countryside. However, the proposal would have unusual projections on the roof, and buttresses at the corners of the walls. The proposal would have extensive glazing, large picture-window dormers, and a

lengthy balcony area, albeit within the footprint of the building. It would also result in additional light spill, another concern of the Partnership Plan.

13. As a result of these features, the proposed building would have an unduly cluttered and domestic appearance, at odds with the existing simple rural barn. As a large, new-build dwelling of overtly domestic design, the proposal would appear excessively sizable, incongruous and out of place, thus harming the natural beauty of its surroundings. As a full application, these matters cannot be overcome by means of a planning condition.
14. The site is in an elevated position, but has extensive trees and hedging surrounding much of it. Nevertheless, vegetation cannot be relied upon to provide screening, particularly in winter months when foliage may be reduced, and nor can its survival in the long term be guaranteed. The proposed building would be seen in the context of other structures. Even so, the dwelling and its harmful visual effects is likely to be visible from the adjacent public footpath. In any case, a high standard of design is sought even if the proposal is not prominent in public views.
15. For the reasons given, the design of the proposal would not be of exceptional quality or truly outstanding, and nor would it significantly enhance its immediate setting. Indeed, I have found that it would detract from the natural beauty of the National Landscape. As such, it would not be justified by Framework paragraph 84(e). No fallback is available under Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order. This is because of the site's National Landscape designation.
16. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the National Landscape. Accordingly, it would conflict with policies HE2 and HE3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan Core Strategy (CELP), adopted April 2014. These require a high quality of design and seek to protect and enhance the landscape character of the area. In accordance with Framework paragraph 189, I attach great negative weight to this harm.

Biodiversity Net Gain

17. A Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 10% is normally required for new development. In this case, the application is made for a self-build scheme, and an exemption from the Biodiversity Net Gain requirement is claimed on this basis.
18. However, the Council has identified that no formal mechanism, such as a planning obligation, is before me to secure the self-build nature of the proposal. I share this concern. I am not satisfied that a planning condition would be sufficient to secure the dwelling as self-build accommodation, for example that its initial occupation would be by a person who has had input into its design and layout. It follows that the biodiversity gain objective would not be met. I give this harm significant negative weight.

Settlement Strategy

19. CELP Policy KS2 seeks to ensure that the location and distribution of development conforms to its settlement hierarchy. This identifies hamlets as the smallest form of settlement, where development is only allowed if functionally required to be in a rural area. Nevertheless, the appeal site is not located within a hamlet, but in the countryside. Consequently, even if the need for self-build units constituted a

functional justification, and were to be secured, the proposal would still fall outside of the scope of Policy KS2. As a result, it would not accord with the settlement hierarchy.

20. I have been referred to a Council decision at Hinton Parva¹ where a barn conversion to nine dwellings was permitted in a hamlet, citing an earlier appeal in Coleshill². However, both schemes related to barn conversions. The Officer Report in the Hinton Parva case does identify some conflict with Policy KS2 and justifies that proposal on the basis of Framework support for the re-use of buildings. Such justification does not apply to the proposal before me, preventing useful comparison.
21. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not accord with the settlement strategy of the Development Plan, conflicting with CELP policy KS2. That said, I am mindful that the policy is not fully consistent with the Framework which, for example, supports the development of under-utilised land and buildings. Accordingly, I give this conflict only moderate negative weight.

Other Considerations and Matters

22. Framework paragraph 11 makes clear that, where Development Plan policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless, amongst other things, the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusal.
23. The parties dispute whether an adequate housing land supply can be demonstrated, given the existence of an in-date examined Annual Position Statement. However, in light of my findings, the application of policies in the Framework which protect the National Landscape provide a strong reason for refusing the proposal. As such, it does not benefit from Framework paragraph 11 and its presumption in favour of sustainable development.
24. That said, changes to the standard method have significantly increased the number of new houses required within the Council's area. Even so, the proposal relates to just a single dwelling and so its advantages to housing supply are small. For the reasons already given, self-build status is not secured. I therefore give the housing supply benefits of the proposal only limited weight.
25. Future occupiers of the proposal would make a positive social and economic contribution to the area, as would its construction economically, thereby helping local rural services. It would also make more efficient use of the land. As a single dwelling, I give these matters further additional limited positive weight.
26. The proposal lies within an area where it may affect the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, which is part of the Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These are protected pursuant to the Conservation of Habitats Regulations 2017. Had I found no harm in respect of the main issues, as competent authority I would have carried out an Appropriate Assessment in respect of the potential effects on the SAC and SPA. However, as the balance of

¹ LPA reference 3/20/0929/FUL

² PINS reference APP/U1240/W/18/3214442

considerations is against the proposal, this matter need not be considered any further in this case.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

27. For the reasons given, I have found conflict with the Development Plan, read as a whole. The benefit to the Green Belt, and the material considerations in this case, do not outweigh my concerns in respect of the other issues. As such, they do not indicate a decision other than in accordance with the Development Plan. This leads me to conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

O Marigold

INSPECTOR