
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2025

by **L C Hughes BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/W/25/3365189

Holloway House Farm, Ashwood Lower Lane, Ashwood, Staffordshire DY7 5AR

- 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 Martin Hudson against the decision of South Staffordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00083/F.
 - The development proposed is conversion of workshop and stables to create 2 residential units.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of workshop and stables to create 2 residential units at Holloway House Farm, Ashwood Lower Lane, Ashwood, Staffordshire, DY7 5AR in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00083/F, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site lies within the West Midlands Green Belt. Policy GB1 of the South Staffordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 (CS) supports the re-use of a building provided that the proposed use would not harm the openness of the Green Belt or the fulfilment of its purposes. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) supports the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction. There is no dispute between the parties that the proposal would not be considered as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Based on the evidence before me, including my own observations, I find no reason to conclude otherwise.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the appeal site is in an appropriate location for the proposed development, having regard to local and national strategy and accessibility to services and facilities.

Reasons

4. Core Policy 1 (CP1) of the CS sets out the spatial strategy for South Staffordshire. The Policy directs growth to the most accessible and sustainable locations in accordance with an identified settlement hierarchy. New development is directed to the main service villages and local service villages which have a wider range of services and facilities. The appeal site is outside of, and some considerable distance from, identified service villages. Outside of the service villages, the policy indicates that development will be restricted to that which meets affordable

housing needs, tourism, provides for sport and recreation and supports the local rural economy and rural diversification. The proposal does not fall into any of these categories.

5. 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 nearby service villages, or the urban conurbation of Dudley, would require future occupiers of the proposed dwellings to travel along roads that are largely unlit, with no footpath and which are subject to the national speed limit. Consequently, future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would likely rely on private car transport to access local services and facilities.
6. The number of vehicle movements arising from 2 dwellings would be modest, and the appeal building's previous use as a workshop and stables would have generated some vehicular movements. Moreover, the Framework notes that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, the site's poor connectivity to facilities and services point to it being in a location where sustainable travel modes could not be prioritised, which would be contrary to the provisions of the Framework.
7. Paragraph 84 of the Framework states that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided. The proposed dwellings, whilst closely related to the farmhouse and other farm buildings, would be separate from nearby settlements and from other buildings in the surrounding rural area by roads and fields. As such, they would be considered as isolated for the purposes of the Framework.
8. Paragraph 84 does allow for isolated developments to be permitted if one or more circumstances apply. One such circumstance is where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting. The proposal would reuse a redundant building. The proposed scheme would be sensitively designed. However, the existing building is not unattractive and fits well within its rural setting. Accordingly, the proposal would not enhance its immediate setting but rather would have a neutral effect. It would not, therefore, meet the requirements of Paragraph 84.
9. Consequently, the appeal site would not be in an appropriate location for the proposed development, having regard to local and national strategy and accessibility to services and facilities. It would therefore be contrary to the spatial strategy detailed in Policy CP1 of the CS, and the Framework.

Other Matters

10. The proposed scheme was dismissed at an earlier appeal.¹ At that time, the Council could demonstrate a 4.74 year housing supply against a requirement of 4 years and the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out at Paragraph 11d of the Framework did not apply. The previous inspector concluded that even if Paragraph 11d had applied, the adverse impact of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. I have had due regard to the earlier decision, which is a material consideration in my determination of this appeal. However, I consider that the current housing shortfall is so severe so as to be a substantial material change.

¹ APP/C3430/W/24/3338018

Planning Balance

11. The proposal would contribute towards housing supply, in an area where there is currently a shortfall. Even though the scheme would provide just two dwellings, given the extent of the housing shortfall this attracts considerable weight. Social and economic benefits associated with the conversion and occupation of the dwellings each attract small weight given the scale of the scheme.
12. The proposal would conflict with Policy CP1 of the CS. Policy CP1 is in general conformity with the aims of the Framework which, in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. The policy can be attributed significant weight due to its consistency with the Framework.
13. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the development plan as a whole.
14. The Council are currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land, said to be 1.17 years. Paragraph 11d of the Framework is therefore engaged.
15. The proposal would align with the aim of the Framework to significantly boost the supply of housing and which recognises that small-scale developments can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement. Due to the degree of housing shortfall the benefit to supply would be considerable. Economic and social benefits associated with the scheme align with those elements of the Framework. Due to the small scale of the scheme, I give these each small weight.
16. The scheme fails to accord with the Framework where it states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth and that sustainable transport modes are prioritised. As the vehicular movements generated by two dwellings would be limited, and the previous use of the building would have generated some vehicular movements, I give this conflict small weight.
17. As a result, the adverse impacts of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore applies.

Conditions

18. I have considered the conditions suggested by the Council, having regard to the Planning Practice Guidance on conditions. I have amended a small number of conditions in the interest of clarity. The appellant has confirmed their agreement to the pre-commencement conditions.
19. In addition to the standard timeframe condition, it is necessary to impose a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted drawing in the interest of certainty (conditions 1 and 2).
20. Conditions 3 and 4 relate to soft and hard landscaping and external materials and are necessary pre-commencement conditions to protect the character and appearance of the area from the outset. Condition 5 is necessary to protect and enhance biodiversity. To prevent harm to protected species, the Council suggested a condition which required external lighting to fully comply with a list of detailed specifications, which is notably restrictive. An alternative provision of external lighting may not be harmful despite not complying with these

specifications. As such, I have attached condition 6 which requires the submission of any external lighting and their details. Condition 7 relates to parking spaces and is included in the interest of highway safety.

Conclusion

21. In this instance, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan, but material considerations indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it.
22. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

L C Hughes

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing number 2326/001.
- 3) No development shall commence until details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include the floorscape treatment of the access, parking and hardstanding areas; boundary treatments; native hedges and planting new trees for mitigation of any trees removed. The replacement trees should be container grown specimens of light or selected standard size. Any failures shall be replaced within the next available planting season.

The approved scheme shall be implemented concurrently with the development and shall be completed within 12 months of the completion of the development. The local planning authority shall be notified when the scheme has been completed.

- 4) No development shall commence until samples of all external materials to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved sample details.
- 5) Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, full details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority of a bat and bird box scheme. The scheme must include a minimum of two swift boxes and one bat box and must detail appropriate locations, models, number and aspect of species-specific measures including any ongoing maintenance requirements.

The agreed scheme will be installed in full prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall thereafter be retained for the life of the development.

- 6) Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of any external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.
- 7) The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the vehicle parking spaces have been provided in accordance with drawing number 2326/001. Thereafter those spaces shall be retained for the parking of vehicles only.

*****END OF SCHEDULE*****