



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 April 2025 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) MIEMA, CEnv

Decision by A Walker MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/25/3361625

Meadow Cottage, Old Lane, Ashford Hill, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 8BG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Steve Wickens against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02846/PIP.
 - The development proposed is the erection of one detached dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for the erection of one detached dwelling at Meadow Cottage, Old Lane, Ashford Hill, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 8BG in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 23/02846/PIP.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.
3. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
4. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
5. Since the planning application was decided by the Council, the National Planning Policy Framework was revised. I have therefore made my decision with regard to the National Planning Framework (December 2024) (the Framework).

Preliminary Matters

6. The Councils Decision Notice included two reasons for refusal. The second reason for refusal stated that *'the site is located within an area at risk from surface water flooding. The application has not been supported by a Flood Risk Sequential Test*

¹ PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

and therefore the application has failed to demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative sites at lower risk of flooding for the proposed development.’ However, since the planning application was refused, the Environment Agency flood risk maps have been updated (March 2025) and the appeal site is no longer within an area at risk of surface water flooding. On this basis, this reason for refusal is now no longer applicable and the issue of flood risk has not been considered further in this appeal decision.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons for the Recommendation

8. The appeal site is located adjacent to Meadow Cottage on Old Lane to the north of the village of Ashford Hill. Old Lane is classified as a Bridleway and Public Right of Way. There are a number of detached residential properties located on Old Lane giving the area a rural residential character. The site is bound by high hedgerows and is currently used as paddock land with stable and riding arena. There is an existing gated access to the site from Old Lane. The proposal is to construct one dwelling.
9. Policy SS1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) (adopted May 2016) (the ‘Local Plan’) directs development primarily to defined settlements and Policy SS6 sets out exceptions that enable housing to be provided in the countryside in certain circumstances. The site lies outside of any Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) and is therefore considered to be in the countryside for planning purposes.
10. Policy SS6(a) states that development proposals for new housing outside of SPB will only be permitted where they are: a) on ‘previously developed land’ provided that i) they do not result in an isolated form of development; and ii) the site is not on high environmental value; and iii) the proposed use and scale of development is appropriate to the site’s context.
11. The main parties agree that the appeal site is classified as previously developed land and is not of high environmental value. Given the proximity to other residential dwellings, the appeal site is also not physically isolated from residential development. However, the Council consider that the limited range of services, facilities and public transport in Ashford Hill would mean future occupants would have to rely on private motorised transport to access day-to-day facilities in nearby Baughurst and Headley and that this renders the appeal site ‘isolated’.
12. The Council also considers the proposal would not meet a locally agreed need. However, the appellant makes no argument that the proposal would accord with Policy SS6(e).
13. In rural areas, paragraph 82 of the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances. Paragraph 83 advocates that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, helping them to thrive, and supporting local services, including those in other nearby settlements. Paragraph 110 advises that patterns of growth should

be managed to support sustainable transport objectives, but also recognises that opportunities for this will vary between urban and rural areas.

14. The proposed new dwelling would have the potential to help support the existing services in Ashford Hill, which includes a church and primary school, but also in nearby Baughurst and Headley. Whilst these existing rural facilities are few, they are likely to be highly valued by their local communities, and therefore there would be small benefits of adding to their catchment populations.
15. Old Lane itself is a quiet rural lane directly joining the B3051. The B3051 has a pavement and provides a safe walking environment into Ashford Hill. I acknowledge it would therefore be possible for some to walk to a limited number of services.
16. Whilst I note that the proposal could include the provision of electric charging points, this does not provide any certainty that future occupiers would use electric vehicles. Visitors to the development are also likely to be largely reliant on private motor vehicles. Therefore, and even when taking account that the Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, the location of the appeal site would not offer genuinely sustainable travel choices to a range of nearby facilities and services. As such, occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be largely reliant on private vehicles, albeit with some limited options for walking and cycling.
17. In support of the appeal, the appellant has referred to a development on Ashford Hill Road for 27 houses that has recently been granted planning permission. I understand that concerns were not raised in this case with regard to isolation, but I do not have the full details in order to consider this further. In addition, a scheme for 27 houses is not directly comparable to the appeal scheme for one dwelling.
18. For these reasons I conclude that, the proposal would not be an appropriate location or land use, having regard to access to services and facilities, it would, therefore, conflict with Local Plan Policies SS1 and SS6 and the Framework, which seek, amongst other things to ensure development is not isolated.

Planning Balance

19. The most recent Housing Land Supply Position Statement (December 2024) published by the Council, claims a 2.94 year supply of deliverable housing sites, which falls short of the Framework's requirement for a 5-year supply. Paragraph 11d) of the Framework therefore applies.
20. In this regard, the benefit of increasing the Borough's housing supply must carry substantial weight. The appeal scheme would only go a small way towards making up the shortfall, but nevertheless, substantial weight is justified due to the urgency of the need to do so. There would also be economic benefits in terms of the investment in the construction of the dwelling and local employment during the construction process. In addition, economic benefits would arise via the proposal increasing local spend from residents of the new dwelling.
21. Local Plan Policies SS1 and SS6 are broadly consistent with the Framework. Although the proposal would not accord with Policies SS1 and SS6 and the Framework's aim of promoting sustainable patterns of development, I find that this

harm would be moderate. Overall, this moderate conflict would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits identified above.

22. For the above reasons, I find that the harm from the conflict with the development plan would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits that would arise from the development, when assessed against the policies in the Framework, taken as a whole. Accordingly, there are material considerations, which indicate a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
23. I have had regard to the numerous appeal decisions² referred to me by the Council, whereby the Inspectors found the harm identified significantly and demonstrably outweighed the benefits of the proposals. However, in all of these instances, the harms identified were different or more numerous than those before me. Moreover, the current shortfall in the supply of deliverable housing sites is far greater than it was at the time these other appeals were determined.

Other Matters

24. Interested parties have raised concerns regarding the impact of construction traffic using Old Lane. It would be for the TDC stage to consider the possible implications of construction and use of traffic management plans.

Conditions

25. The PPG makes it clear that it is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle, whose terms may only include the site location, type, and amount of development. Therefore, I have not imposed any conditions.
26. Where permission in principle is granted by application, such as this, the default duration of that permission is three years, and there is no justification to vary this period in this case.

Conclusion and Recommendation

27. For the above reasons, having regard to the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Elizabeth Davies

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

28. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is allowed.

A Walker

INSPECTOR

² Appeal references APP/H1705/W/23/3318470, APP/H1705/W/22/3294857, APP/H1705/W/22/3294866, APP/H1705/W/23/3328855, APP/H1705/W/23/3325642, APP/H1705/W/22/3313295, APP/H1705/W/22/3306530 and APP/H1705/W/23/3324596