
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 August 2025

by **N Bromley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/25/3366970

Land North West A352 / Herrison Road Junction, Charlton Down, Dorset DT2 9RJ

- 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 and Mrs Harries against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/FUL/2025/00690.
 - The development proposed is construction of new vehicular access, farm track and turning area and a new agricultural building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appeal site address in the banner heading above is taken from the original planning application form. I have included a postcode for clarity.

Main Issue

3. Whether the size of the proposed building is reasonably required for the purposes of agriculture at the site, including its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises greenfield land within the open countryside. The land is long and narrow, situated between the A352 and the River Cerne. Access to the land is taken from the A352.
5. As an undeveloped field, bounded by tall hedgerows, the site makes a positive contribution to the countryside and surrounding landscape. Indeed, despite the nearby village of Charlton Down, the surrounding area has a prevailing rural character largely comprising open fields with an undulating topography. Mature trees and tall hedgerows to field boundaries are also a common feature.
6. Policy ECON9 of the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015 (the Local Plan) relates to agricultural buildings, which are supported only where necessary for the purposes of agriculture on the unit, and where their landscape impact would be minimised. Policies ENV1 and ENV10 of the Local Plan also seek development which is located and designed so that it does not detract from local landscape character, and where reasonable, it should provide enhancements.
7. The Local Plan dates from 2015 but the weight to be attached to the policies does not hinge on its age. Paragraph 232 of the National Planning Policy Framework

(the Framework) makes it clear that due weight should be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. While Policy ECON9 of the Local Plan sets out a number of specific criteria, it is broadly consistent with the Framework which seeks to support a prosperous rural economy. Likewise, Policies ENV1 and ENV10 of the Local Plan are consistent with the Framework which seeks the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places.

8. With three bays and a height of circa 7.5 metres, the proposed building would be large. In combination with the vast amount of hardstandings, the proposed development would introduce a sizeable amount of new development onto the land.
9. There is some uncertainty about the extent of the land and its current use. The appellant suggests that the land is actively managed for agricultural purposes, and the wider holding extends to 2.71 hectares. However, there is otherwise limited information to support these claims. In particular, a plan which shows the extent of the wider holding has not been provided. In addition, although it is suggested that the intention of the appellant is to introduce cattle onto the land, it is not known whether the land is or would comprise an agricultural enterprise or not. I am also mindful that the proposed development would reduce the amount of useable field. As such, I am not satisfied that all of the machinery and vehicles, which are proposed to be stored within the building, are fully justified for agricultural purposes. Or that the size of the holding warrants the extent of machinery and vehicles identified. Consequently, it must follow that the size of building is not reasonably required.
10. Notwithstanding that the vertical timber cladding to the walls and lightweight corrugated sheets to the roof would be appropriate materials for a rural building, the proposal would be overly large. Indeed, the size of the building would be exacerbated by the three excessive roller shutter doors.
11. While I accept that roller shutter doors are used on many rural buildings, particularly in the interests of security and crime prevention, three large scale doors on the same elevation would be extreme and the building would appear industrial as opposed to agricultural. Therefore, within its rural setting, the proposal would be incongruous and its position near to other buildings would not lessen the impact.
12. Furthermore, the dominant front elevation would be visible from the nearby public footpath. Although shorter distance views from the public footpath are largely screened by mature trees, the proposal, in particular the front elevation, would be much more visible from further along the path. The amount of hardstandings would also be prevalent from the footpath and contribute to the harmful appearance of the proposed development within the landscape.
13. Tree planting near to the building and within the site would soften the appearance of the proposal. However, a landscaping scheme has not been submitted. Even so, it would be difficult to screen the front elevation of the building, particularly from the footpath which is on significantly higher ground than the appeal site. Likewise, the size and height of the building would also be difficult to screen from views from within the wider landscape, including the road whereby the top section would be visible.

14. The appellant suggests that the proposed building is proportionate to the size of the land, when compared to a building constructed under Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (the Order). However, Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Order requires the building to be reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within an agricultural unit. There are also other specific limitations and conditions, and it is not known whether the proposed building would accord with them or not. Accordingly, I am not satisfied that a fair comparison can be drawn, and I therefore attach limited weight to that argument.
15. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the size of the proposed building is not reasonably required for the purposes of agriculture at the site, which would also harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposal would not accord with Policies ECON9, ENV1 and ENV10 of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

16. The proposed development would provide a safe and secure building for the appellants vehicles and machinery. Nonetheless, these are private benefits, to which I therefore afford only limited weight.
17. I acknowledge that machinery is required for riverbank maintenance and management works on the land, to aid flood mitigation. However, I am not satisfied on the evidence before me that there is a need for machinery to be permanently stored on the site to carry out these activities. Likewise, while the proposed access would provide highway safety benefits for vehicles accessing the site, the appellant could propose these improvements irrespective of the outcome of this appeal. As such, I attach limited weight to these matters.
18. No objections have been raised with regards to flooding and the solar panels would promote the use of renewable energy and low-carbon technologies, as supported by the Framework. Nevertheless, these are requirements of planning policy and taken together they carry modest weight.
19. Taking the above matters into consideration, the benefits would not outweigh the harm identified in the main issue. Consequently, the proposed development would conflict with policies contained within the development plan as a whole. I have found no other material circumstances that would outweigh that conflict.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

N Bromley

INSPECTOR