
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2025

by N Bromley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 August 2025.

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/25/3365851

2 Hillrise, Manswood, Witchampton, Dorset BH21 5BD

- 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 Amabel Clarke against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/FUL/2024/04345.
 - The development proposed is described as “Part Retention of the existing dwelling and severance of the land to erect two semi-detached dwellings together with landscaping, parking and associated works”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Dorset Council against Amabel Clarke. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development accords with the development plan strategy for housing and would be in a sustainable location, and
 - whether the proposed development would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Reasons

Location

4. The appeal site comprises the former garden of 2 Hillrise, a semi-detached residential property, located within the open countryside. The land is now separated from the property and a fence has been erected between them. A single storey garage building is located to the rear of the site, with a shared vehicle access from the road. The land is overgrown and its appearance as a garden has been diminished.
5. The site is physically and functionally detached from larger settlements and despite Manswood being described as a small hamlet, residential dwellings are generally sporadic. The roads are narrow, and the surrounding area is remote, with a prevailing rural character, largely comprising open fields, bounded by tall hedgerows and an abundance of mature trees and small woodlands. Given such,

and with due regard to the cited judgment¹, the site is within an isolated countryside location.

6. Policy KS2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan Part 1 – Core Strategy, April 2014 (the Local Plan) 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 where functionally required to be in a rural area.
7. There is no suggestion that the proposed dwellings are functionally required to be in a rural area, and consequently, the proposed development is contrary to the Council's development plan strategy for housing.
8. The nearest village to the appeal site is Witchampton but there is otherwise limited information in respect of the services, facilities and public transport opportunities on offer within the settlement. The roads within the area do not have pavements or street lighting and at 1.5 kilometres away, future occupiers of the proposed development would be discouraged from walking to Witchampton. This would be particularly the case during the winter months and hours of darkness. For similar reasons, I am also not persuaded that future occupiers would cycle to access the services and facilities on offer in larger settlements. There is also limited evidence before me regarding access to a bus service nearby.
9. I acknowledge that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Even so, I consider the site to be highly inaccessible and physically remote from the nearest settlements. In these circumstances, the future occupants would be highly dependent on the use of private cars for their day-to-day needs and the proposal would not offer a genuine choice of transport or prioritise sustainable transport modes. Consequently, the proposal would not enhance or maintain the vitality of the nearby community.
10. For the above reasons and on the evidence before me, I conclude that the proposed development does not accord with the development plan strategy for housing, and it would not be in a sustainable location. It would thereby conflict with Policy KS2 of the Local Plan. There would also be conflict with the Framework insofar as it states that planning decisions should avoid isolated homes in the countryside.

Cranborne Chase National Landscape

11. The statutory purpose of National Landscapes is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Landscapes. Relevant authorities must 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, including National Landscapes.
12. The Framework describes National Landscapes as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty, to the conservation and enhancement of which great weight should be given.
13. Policy HE3 of the Local Plan seeks development that would protect and enhance the landscape character of the area. Within a National Landscape (NL), proposals

¹ Braintree DC v SSCLG, Greyread Ltd & Granville Developments Ltd [2018] EWCA Civ 610

will need to demonstrate that account has been taken of the relevant Management Plan.

14. The Management Plan for the NL is the 'Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan 2019-2024'. The Management Plan describes the wider landscape as a deeply rural area with widely scattered hamlets, villages and narrow roads. The appeal site lies within the Southern Downland Belt character area. Within this area, development is low density, with a predominantly arable landscape and large blocks of woodland and coppice. The appeal site, along a quiet rural road, is tranquil and the surrounding area reflects the strong characteristics of the NL.
15. The proposed dwellings would front the road and be built up close to it. While they would reflect the design and scale of the adjacent pair of semi-detached dwellings they would extend the amount of built development along the road, resulting in a small linear row of properties. Although this would reflect a similar row of four properties further along the road, it would nonetheless result in additional built development within the landscape. Furthermore, with a two-storey height and a generous footprint, the new houses would be a noticeable addition along the road, resulting in a visual change to the rural setting of the road and wider landscape. As a consequence, the proposal would result in a small loss of the distinctive open character of the landscape.
16. I acknowledge that the harm would be tempered by the acceptable appearance of the proposals, in terms of facing materials and landscaping, including a living green roof to the single storey rear extension. However, I am not persuaded that the proposal would be high quality or innovative.
17. Overall, even though the identified harm of the proposed development would be modest, for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, and it would not accord with Policy HE3 of the Local Plan. It would also be contrary to the identified objectives of the Framework.

Other Matters

18. My attention has been drawn to a recent appeal decision². The appellant suggests that the recent appeal decision demonstrates that due to the age of the development plan being more than five years old and there is a local housing need, the 'Tilted Balance' in paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged. However, the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework does not apply where policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Footnote 7 to paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is clear that this applies to National Landscapes. As a result, and regardless of the housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply in this case.
19. Whilst I recognise the value of reusing brownfield sites for new homes, the land has now been separated from the garden of 2 Hillrise, and it is not within a sustainable rural location. As such, the weight I afford to the benefit of utilising previously developed land is tempered. Even so, the proposal for two, family sized homes on

² Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/24/3353912 - Land West of Church Hill and Land Off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull, Dorset, DT10 1PU

land of low ecological value would make efficient and effective use of underutilised land. It is also suggested that it would meet Passivhaus design standards, so as to be a low carbon and energy efficient home. As a small site, the proposed development could also be delivered relatively quickly. Therefore, the proposal would contribute to boosting the supply of new housing, as referenced in the Framework. There would also be social and economic benefits to local services during the construction and occupancy phases. Nonetheless, it is likely that the above benefits would be limited in the context of a development for two houses, thereby attracting modest weight.

20. No objections have been raised with regards to highways safety, land contamination, effects on the living conditions of neighbouring properties, trees, flooding or drainage. Biodiversity enhancements would also be achieved. Nevertheless, these are requirements of planning policy and taken together they carry neutral weight.
21. The proposed development would not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, and it would not be a suitable and sustainable location for new housing. Collectively I attach significant weight to these matters. Consequently, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan as a whole. It would also conflict with the Framework and there are no material considerations, which outweigh the conflict.

Conclusion

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

N Bromley

INSPECTOR