



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 July 2025

by N Bromley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/25/3364715

Existing manège building, Cosford Grange, Cosford, Albrighton TF11 9JB

- 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 Ms Claire Stokes against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/03669/FUL.
 - The development proposed is conversion of existing manège building to provide a five-bed house and six stables.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of existing manège building to provide a five-bed house and six stables at Existing manège building, Cosford Grange, Cosford, Albrighton TF11 9JB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/03669/FUL, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Ms Claire Stokes against the decision of Shropshire Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matter

3. The Council's reason for refusal clearly relates to the conversion of the existing manège building to a five-bed house (the proposal) and no concerns are raised with the part of the appeal scheme for six stables. I have no reason to come to a different conclusion on that element of the scheme and have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

4. Whether or not the proposal would be a suitable location for residential development having regard to the spatial strategy of the development plan.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is occupied by a large barn, previously in use as an indoor manège. Access to the building is via the surrounding horse paddocks, which are adjacent to the access drive to Cosford Grange, a large country house, which includes estate buildings and associated land.
6. Despite clusters of buildings nearby, including Cosford Grange and other large houses, the wider surrounding area is relatively remote and rural in character. Indeed, the appeal site is physically detached from nearby settlements and

functionally separate from other development. Given such, and with due regard to the cited judgment¹, the site is within an isolated countryside location.

7. Policy CS5 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy, 2011 (CS), allows for certain new development in the open countryside, where it maintains and enhances the countryside's vitality and character and improves the sustainability of rural communities. A list of suitable development types is provided by the policy. Amongst other things, this includes open market residential conversions where they involve a heritage asset.
8. Policy MD7a of the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan, adopted 2015 (the SAMDev) relates specifically to managing housing development in the countryside and provides further criteria to Policy CS5 of the CS. The policy establishes that new market housing will be strictly controlled in the open countryside, but it does support open market residential conversions in the countryside where the building is of a design and form which is of merit for its heritage value.
9. Although there are limited details about the design concept of the development, including the demolition and construction works necessary to complete the proposed development, the appeal scheme is described as the conversion and re-use of the barn for open market housing. However, it is not a heritage asset and as such, the proposed development would fail to satisfy Policy CS5 of the CS and Policy MD7a of the SAMDev.
10. There is limited evidence before me regarding the level of services and amenities nearby and whether future occupiers would have access to a bus service. As such, future occupants would be highly dependent on the use of private cars for their day-to-day needs, and it is not clear how the proposal would enhance or maintain the vitality of the nearby community.
11. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not be a suitable location for residential development having regard to the spatial strategy of the development plan. It would thereby conflict with Policies CS4 and CS5 of the CS and Policies MD3, MD7a and MD7b of the SAMDev, which together and amongst other things seek to direct new housing development to sustainable locations.

Other Considerations

12. The appeal building comprises previously developed land within the Green Belt. The proposed development would re-use a building that is of a permanent and substantial construction. It would also result in a noticeable reduction in the size of the existing building and would comprise the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land. Even with domestic paraphernalia associated with a dwelling, the appeal scheme would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, despite the concerns of Albrighton Parish Council about the loss of openness, I agree with the main parties that the proposal would comply with paragraph 154 of the Framework, and it would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
13. The proposed stable building and new dwelling would also have an acceptable appearance, appropriate for the rural setting. In addition, the appearance of the

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

buildings and the external areas around them would be supplemented by an extensive soft landscaping scheme. Collectively, the proposals would result in an enhancement to the landscape, albeit these enhancements would be localised.

14. The Council accept that they cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land, albeit at 4.73 years the short fall is modest. Nonetheless, the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out at Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework applies. In these circumstances, Paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework states that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse effects of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
15. The appeal scheme would constitute the development of an isolated home in the countryside. Paragraph 84 of the Framework seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more circumstances apply, including where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.
16. During my site visit I observed that the building is no longer in use as a manège. Instead, it appeared to be primarily used for the storage of tractors, trailers and a caravan. While some facing materials were missing and the fabric of the building has a rustic appearance, there is otherwise limited substantive evidence before me to adequately demonstrate that the appeal building is indeed redundant or disused. Consequently, it does not meet paragraph 84c of the Framework.
17. By their nature, residential conversions allowed under Policy CS5 of the CS and Policy MD7a of the SAMDev are likely to be in isolated locations and there is no specific requirement for the converted building to be in a sustainable location. Likewise, this is the case for paragraph 84c of the Framework. Therefore, even though the building is not redundant or disused, or a heritage asset, the proposal would re-use an existing building and there would be visual enhancements to the landscape. Accordingly, the weight to be afforded to the conflict with the development strategy, as well as paragraph 84c of the Framework, in light of the land supply shortfall, is reduced. I attach modest weight to the conflict in these circumstances.
18. The proposed stables and the new dwelling would make efficient and effective use of previously developed land, re-purposing the existing building and providing visual enhancements to create a development that would function well and add to the overall quality of the area, as supported by the Framework. A new dwelling would also 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 without conflict with neighbouring land uses. In combination, and in the context of the shortfall in housing land, the benefits attract considerable positive weight in my determination and attract moderate weight overall.
19. In the context of paragraph 11 of the Framework, the adverse impacts of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole. Accordingly, while the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole, material considerations, including the Framework, outweigh that conflict and indicate that

planning permission should be granted for development which is not in accordance with it.

Conditions

20. I have had regard to conditions suggested by the Council, as well as to the Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance. In addition to the standard time limit condition, it is necessary to impose a condition that requires the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans for certainty.
21. Notwithstanding the external materials listed on the original planning application form, in order to ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory, a condition is imposed to require samples of the external materials to be approved. A condition to secure the implementation of the approved soft landscaping scheme is reasonable and necessary in the context of the approved development and to provide the landscape enhancements.
22. The Council has suggested conditions preventing commencement of the development until three bat emergence and re-entry surveys have taken place between the active bat season. However, the application was accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (ecology report), and subsequent Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys (the survey). These confirm that bats are present within the building and that a Natural England Bat Mitigation License will be required. As such, it would not be reasonable or necessary to impose conditions preventing development until further surveys are carried out or details of the license have been provided. Indeed, the recommendations set out in the survey set out that a European Protected Species Licence application to Natural England will be required to legally permit the proposed works.
23. Conditions to secure the creation of two roosting opportunities and a minimum of two bird boxes, prior to the occupation of the development, are reasonable and necessary, in accordance with the survey, in the interest of wildlife protection. Likewise, the prior approval of external lighting is necessary. Also, a condition requiring confirmation that all of the recommendations of the ecology report have been carried out is necessary to mitigate the impact of the development and provide biodiversity enhancements. This is required to be submitted to the Council prior to the occupation of the buildings.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

N Bromley

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 the following approved plans, numbered: 2120-049-sk1; 1871D-01; 1871D-05; 1871D-07; and BEA-25-023-01 Rev P01.
- 3) No development above ground level shall take place until details / samples of the materials to be used in the construction of external walls and roofs of the buildings 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 details / samples.
- 4) Prior to the installation of external lighting, full details, including height, design, location and intensity, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The lighting installation shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 5) All proposed planting, as shown on the Detailed Soft Landscape Proposals Plan Dwg No. BEA-25-023-01 Rev P01, shall be implemented no later than the end of the first planting season following the first use of the development hereby permitted. Any approved planting which is removed, dies or becomes seriously damaged or diseased within a period of five years from first planting, shall be replaced with other planting of similar size, species and maturity in the first available planting season.
- 6) Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, a minimum of two roosting opportunities for bats shall be created in accordance with the Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys (Arbtech, 25 June 2024). The roosting opportunities shall thereafter be maintained for the lifetime of the development.
- 7) Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, a minimum of two bird boxes shall be installed on the site in accordance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (Arbtech, 08 August 2024). The bird boxes shall thereafter be maintained for the lifetime of the development.
- 8) Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, a statement, demonstrating that all works to the site have been undertaken in accordance with the Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys (Arbtech, 25 June 2024) and with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (Arbtech, 08 August 2024), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The statement shall include photographs of installed bat and bird boxes at the site and evidence of pre-commencement checks undertaken.