
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 September 2025

by **V Goldberg BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L3815/W/25/3363566

Plot 2, Ham Road, Sidlesham, West Sussex PO20 7NS

- 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 Mrs Tara Dexter against the decision of Chichester District Council.
 - The application Ref is SI/24/01838/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of agricultural container, shed and animal shelters.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development plan against which the application was determined has changed, as Chichester District Council adopted a new local plan in August 2025. The Council detailed policies from the plan that has now been adopted in its decision notice and appeal statement. I have therefore determined the appeal based on the policies detailed as 'emerging' in the decision notice which are taken from the Chichester Local Plan 2021-2039, adopted in August 2025 (Local Plan).
3. The application form states the development started in March 2024. During my visit, I noted that the agricultural container, shed and animal shelters were complete, and they accord with the application plans before me. I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis that the development has already taken place.
4. The decision notice and appeal relate solely to the installation of the agricultural container. Accordingly, this decision will be determined on this basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - whether the agricultural container is appropriate in the countryside having regard to the Council's spatial strategy; and;
 - the effect of the agricultural container on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Spatial Strategy

6. The appeal site is located outside of a settlement boundary and is therefore in the countryside as defined in the Local Plan. Policies S2 and NE10 of the Local Plan

restrict development outside of settlements and require development to comply with five criteria. Compliance with three of these requirements is contested.

7. The requirement for the development to be well related to an existing farmstead, a group of buildings, or to be located close to an established settlement is not satisfied. The appeal site comprises agricultural land that neither forms part of nor adjoins an existing farmstead. Reference is made to the definition of a farmstead as 'the farm and its buildings', by this definition, the development fails to meet the criterion, as the only buildings present are those detailed as part of this appeal, and therefore, they do not constitute an existing farmstead. Furthermore, the appellant refers to the site as a smallholding rather than a farmstead, there are no existing buildings in proximity to the agricultural container, and the site lies at a considerable distance from the nearest settlement.
8. The development would comply with the requirement to be complementary to its countryside location and it not prejudicing any viable agricultural operation. This is because, the container is used as a welfare facility for the appellant, who is working on the land in connection with the agricultural use. As a result, the development does not prevent the agricultural operation of the site.
9. The final disputed criterion is whether the scale, form, bulk, siting, design and materials of the container are appropriate to its countryside location, and whether it would cause unacceptable harm to its rural setting. The container is a standard shipping container and contains a toilet, shower, kitchenette and separate storage room. Its size is not excessive as it occupies a modest area on the plot and the facilities within it, are reasonably used to support the agricultural use of the land.
10. Despite the scale of the building not being excessive, its design, siting and materials would fail to be appropriate in this countryside location and would cause unacceptable harm to its rural setting. This will be addressed further in the main issue below.
11. For the above reasons, the agricultural container fails to comply with criteria two and four of policy NE10 of the Local Plan. It is therefore inappropriate development in the countryside having regard to the Council's spatial strategy.

Character and Appearance

12. The appeal site is a parcel of agricultural land, surrounded by agricultural fields demarcated by hedgerows. The surrounding farmed rural landscape positively contributes to the rural character and appearance of the countryside.
13. Due to its design and siting, the agricultural container appears stark in this rural setting. This is partly due to its prominent position on the appeal site, as it is visible from adjoining land and gaps in the hedgerow along Ham Road. Given it is located on and surrounded by undeveloped agricultural fields, the shipping container, which is not agricultural in appearance, appears as an incongruous addition in this pastoral setting.
14. In addition, its clad design, large French doors, windows and living walls result in the container having a domestic appearance that is uncharacteristic of this rural setting. Whilst the external cladding and living walls soften the industrial appearance of the container, the resultant domestic appearance fails to respect and enhance the distinctive local landscape character.

15. Whilst there may be a functional need for welfare facilities, secure storage and facilities for visits from educational groups, it has not been demonstrated that the same benefits could not be achieved in a less harmful way.
16. For the above reasons, the agricultural container has an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. It is therefore contrary to Policies NE2 and NE10 of the Local Plan. These policies require development to respect and enhance distinctive local landscape character and conserve and enhance qualities of the rural landscape character and countryside setting.

Other Matters

17. Reference is made to an appeal decision¹ which details that containers should not be regarded as buildings. However, whether permission is required for the container is not a consideration in this appeal as planning permission is sought for an agricultural container, shed and animal shelters.

Conclusion

18. The development conflicts with the development plan and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

V Goldberg

INSPECTOR

¹ APP/V0728/W/23/3314720