



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2025

by R Gee BA (Hons) Dip TP PGCert UD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/25/3369498

Land Opposite 1 Stratford Road, Sandy, Central Bedfordshire SG19 2AA

- 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 A Smith against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is CB/25/00538/FULL.
 - The development proposed is use of land for equestrian with erection of no. 2 stables and associated tack room, feed store and hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for use of land for equestrian with erection of no. 2 stables and associated tack room, feed store and hardstanding at Land Opposite 1 Stratford Road, Sandy, Central Bedfordshire SG19 2AA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref CB/25/00538/FULL, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has submitted a Transport Statement¹ (TS) with the appeal. An appeal should not normally be used to evolve a scheme, and it is important that what is considered by the Inspector at appeal is essentially the same scheme that was considered by the local planning authority and by interested parties. It is, however, for the Inspector to determine whether, exceptionally, any additional information submitted during the appeal process should be accepted. In this case, I am content that the TS does not constitute a substantive or fundamental change to the proposal. It does not alter the boundary of the site, the development proposed or its appearance. I am also satisfied that no interests would be prejudiced if I were to accept the TS. I have therefore considered the appeal based on this technical documentation.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i) the effect of the proposal upon character and appearance; and
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on highway safety.

¹ Stunt Consulting Planning Appeal Statement (Transport) 04 July 2025 Document Reference: B2218/TAS01

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal relates to a roughly rectangular plot of land. There is a small, dilapidated structure within the plot, which is bounded by post and rail fencing and vegetation to its boundaries. Beyond the mature landscaping to its western boundary lies an elevated railway line and a dense area of woodland is present to the south.
5. The appeal site lies in the countryside. In the immediate vicinity of the site, there are clusters of dwellings along the length of Stratford Road and fields have been subdivided with post and rail fencing into separate paddocks.
6. The western side of Stratford Lane is predominantly open and rural in character. Nevertheless, its backdrop includes an elevated railway line with overhead cabling/signals with a large car park and supermarket beyond. Accordingly, whilst the site lies within the countryside it is strongly influenced by its urban environs.
7. Policy DC4 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan Adopted 2021 (LP) supports small scale equestrian development in rural areas subject to criteria including, but not limited to, new freestanding stables and provision for vehicle parking must be well screened from the surrounding countryside; should avoid adverse impact on the public Rights of Way network; and must not interfere with the amenity of adjoining residents.
8. I observed numerous sporadically located stables, shepherd huts and field shelters within the vicinity of the appeal site. It is not uncharacteristic to see such structures in the rural landscape and the proposed development would not be an incongruous addition to the locality. It therefore follows that I do not concur that the proposed development would be entirely at odds with the surrounding landscape and settlement pattern.
9. In this case, the development would be of a modest size and scale, proportionate to the amount of land associated with it. The proposal would be constructed out of materials typically found on stable buildings, thereby being appropriate to a rural location. In addition, the proposed hardstanding remains closely associated with the stable complex, both visually and functionally.
10. The evidence indicates that the proposal abuts a well-used public right of way known as Long Ridge Track Bedfordshire Historic Trail, located to the east of the site, running along Stratford Road through Sandy connecting with the rural countryside. The proposal would be set back from the highway. Although the proposal would be visible it would not appear visually dominant from approaches within the streetscene, or from long range views. Whilst landscaping can rarely be relied upon in the long term with regards to its maintenance, retention and survival, in any event, I find the proposal would be acceptable within this context.
11. For the reasons stated, I conclude that the proposal would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal therefore accords with Policies SP7, DC4, HQ1 and EE5 of the LP. Collectively, and amongst other things, these seek to ensure that all developments are of the highest possible quality and to respect, retain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local

landscape by reflecting the local character in terms of the scale and pattern of the surrounding landscape.

Highway safety

12. Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.
13. Stratford Road is accessed via its junction with Potton Road at a mini- roundabout. Signage at the entrance to road demonstrates that the road is a cul-de-sac and has no turning facilities. Stratford Road is of varying widths, ranging from single track in places to wider sections that could allow vehicles to pass each other.
14. Stratford Road provides access for a number of farmsteads and dwellings. Whilst existing development may generate a number of trips at certain times of the day, the road is still likely to be lightly trafficked in the most part. The nature of the road would also mean that passing traffic would most likely be slow moving.
15. The appellant indicates that the proposal is for private/domestic use with an anticipated 2-3 movements a day associated with the proposed use. Whilst details of trip generation have not been provided for the current use of the site it is not disputed between the parties that a field structure and formal access are currently *in situ* and appear have been for some time. Even though the planning status of these are unknown, the grazing of animals/horses on the land would inevitably generate vehicular movements in its own right. Given the limited scale of the proposal for 2no stables overall it is therefore likely that the change in trips generated by the proposal when compared with the existing use would not be significant.
16. The TS provides clarity over the available visibility splays at both the site access onto Stratford Road and the junction of Stratford Road with Potton Road (the B1042). The appellant refers to the Manual for Streets (MfS) requirement for 2.4m x 43m, which is achievable at the field access, whereas the Council submits that as an equestrian proposal the visibility splay should be that of agricultural developments which is increased to 3.5 x 43 m. 2.4m x 43m visibility splays are achievable at the field access junction. In either of these circumstances the visibility splays are not achievable in both directions at the junction of Stratford Road with Potton Road. The TS demonstrates that a 2.4m x 25m splay would be achievable to the western direction of the junction of Stratford Road with Potton Road and that 2.4m x 43m splay is achievable at the appeal site access.
17. The information before me indicates that there have been no recorded accidents at this junction over the last 25 years. No measured speed survey has been provided specific to the appeal proposal. However, the TS refers to data presented with recent applications proximate to the appeal site which indicated traffic speeds to be lower than the speed limit. At the time of my visit, which although only a snapshot of time, my observations concur that vehicle speeds are likely to be less than the permitted speed limit due to the presence of the roundabout and a signalled crossing.

18. Stratford Road already serves a number of properties and as such the servicing of the plot for 2no stables is unlikely to result in a material increase in the use of this road and junction. Having regard to the available visibility at the junction with Potton Road the proposal would be unlikely to result in demonstrable conflict and safety of the users of the public highway. Even if daily trips were greater than those connected with existing site use, there is nothing substantive before me to demonstrate that the overall net increase would be so significant as to have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or to lead to severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network.
19. In response to the Council's concerns regarding the potential for a horse box to overrun the public highway when entering or exiting the site the Council maintains that the tracking diagrams are insufficient. The TS includes tracking data using a 3.5t standard box van along with a car and trailer to demonstrate that manoeuvring is achievable without detriment to highway safety. On the balance of probabilities, the site is unlikely to be accessed by vehicles larger than a private motor vehicle on a regular basis and therefore I am satisfied that if a larger vehicle were to be used any overrun would not be materially harmful to highway safety having regard to paragraph 116 of the Framework.
20. My attention has been drawn to a dismissed appeal² in 2018 which sought to take access from the western end of Stratford Road. However, the evidence before me indicates that the proposal related to scheme related to the change of use for a caravan park for up to 19 pitches for touring holiday caravans and therefore, I am satisfied that the scale and nature of the proposals are not directly comparable. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
21. In conclusion, while it is possible that visibility could be constrained to a degree, the particular characteristics of the road and locality are such that the proposal is unlikely to result in unacceptable harm to highway safety. As such, it accords with Policies T2 and T3 of the LP insofar as they seek, among other matters, for development to integrate well with the existing transport network, to not impede traffic flow and to refuse planning permission for development that would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Conditions

22. The Council has provided a list of suggested conditions, which I have considered with regard to the tests set out in the Framework and the PPG. Where appropriate, I have adjusted the wording of the conditions to improve precision and enforceability.
23. The pre-commencement conditions set out in the conditions schedule below are appropriate and are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and have been agreed by the appellant.
24. The standard timeframe condition (1) and a condition relating to the approved plans (2) is attached in the interests of certainty and proper planning.
25. The evidence indicates that the appeal site lies within an area associated with the Roman town of Sandy and therefore, the proposed development site has the potential to impact upon the significance of any surviving heritage assets with

² Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/22/3313554

- archaeological interest. Accordingly, it is reasonable and necessary to attach a pre-commencement of works condition requiring a written scheme of investigation (3).
26. Based on the information available, the proposal is subject to statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG). The submitted details indicate that the proposed scheme would lead to the loss of habitat, but the Council is satisfied that there are sufficient areas within the site to achieve the required 10% BNG, and I have no reason to reach a different view in this regard. The general Biodiversity Gain Condition (BGC) has a separate statutory basis as a planning condition under Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Act. On this basis, the Planning Practice Guide (PPG) strongly encourages decision makers to not include the BGC, or the reasons for applying it, in the list of conditions imposed in the written notice when granting planning permission. To ensure works are ecologically sensitive, and do not result in adverse effect to protected species, a condition to secure a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (4) is reasonable and necessary.
27. Whilst it is recognised that the appeal site lies within flood zone 1³ surface water flooding can occur in any flood zone. Areas of hardstanding are to be provided within the site, including the access, and therefore it is reasonable and necessary to impose a condition to manage surface water drainage (5) to ensure no environmental harm arises.
28. The implementation of the access, including visibility splays (6), the specification of the materials (7), and for gates (8) to be set back into the site, would be required by conditions in the interests of the safe use of the access.
29. The application form and submitted plans given indication of the external finish of the stables. The Council seeks sample materials to be submitted for approval. However, I consider this is unduly onerous and that to submit the precise details (9) for approval would be sufficient in the interests of protecting the character and appearance of the locality.
30. A condition to require the precise details and location of the proposed fencing (10) is reasonable and necessary. However, to restrict permitted development rights for other means of enclosure is not justified.
31. A condition for the removal of surplus lengths of the existing surfaced access (11) is reasonable and necessary in the interests of character and appearance. A condition which restricts external lighting (12) is reasonable and necessary to limit and prevent light pollution in the countryside.
32. The proposal has been considered on the basis that the development would be used for private recreational use. I have therefore attached a condition to restrict any trade or business use (13).
33. The Council recommends a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and an Ecological Enhancement Strategy condition. However, having regard to the guidance contained within the PPG and the Framework these conditions are onerous compared to the scale of development. In this circumstance I do not consider them to be necessary or reasonable on other respects.
34. The Council has suggested a condition to require the cutting back of existing vegetation. However, this is not relevant to the development, reasonable or

³ As defined by Environment Agency mapping

necessary, or reasonable in other respects, particularly having regard to the requirements of the visibility condition. It is not reasonable or necessary to impose a condition preventing the burning of manure on site as this is covered by other legislation.

35. I have not included a condition for finished ground levels as the submitted plans indicate the total height of the stables and given the relationship of the proposal away from residential properties.
36. I have not included the suggested condition for compliance with the Council's Construction Code of Practice for Developers and Contractors given the scale and nature of the proposed development and its location away from residential properties.

Conclusion

37. For the reasons given, the proposal would accord with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

R. Gee

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following plans: 400 Site Location Plan, 200A Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations and 501B Proposed and Existing Block Plan.
3. No development shall take place until: (i) An archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority; and (ii) Any necessary safeguarding measures to ensure the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording identified in the WSI have been undertaken in accordance with a specification and timetable that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development should be carried out in full accordance with the approved details within the WSI.
4. No development shall commence (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall be informed by the August 2024 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and include the following.
 - a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.

- b) Identification of 'biodiversity protection zones'.
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to harm to biodiversity features.
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

5. No development shall commence until a detailed surface water drainage scheme, to manage surface water runoff from the development and the vehicular access, to manage surface water runoff from the development for up to and including the 1 in 30 year event, and a maintenance and management plan for the scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the site shall be developed in full accordance with the approved details.
6. Prior to the hereby approved development being brought into use visibility splays shall be provided at the junction of the access at Stratford Road with the public highway of at least 2.4m measured along the centre line of the proposed access from its junction with the channel of the public highway and 43.0m measured from the centre line of the proposed access along the line of the channel of the public highway. The required vision splays shall remain free of any obstruction for the perpetuity of the development.
7. Prior to the hereby approved development being brought into use the vehicular access shall be surfaced in a solid bound materials (not loose aggregate) for a distance of 8.0m into the site, measured from the highway boundary. Once implemented it shall remain as such in perpetuity.
8. Notwithstanding the approved plans, any gates provided shall open away from the highway and be set back a distance of at least 11m from the nearside kerb line.
9. Prior to installation of the hereby approved stables precise details and specifications of all external materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and maintained as such throughout the life of the development.
10. Prior to installation precise details of the timber post and rail fencing, including positions and design shall be submitted for approval in writing by the local planning authority. The boundary treatment shall be implemented in full accordance with the approved details before the use hereby permitted is commenced and be thereafter retained as such.

11. Before the access is first brought into use, any existing surplus lengths of access not incorporated in the access shown on the approved plan no. 501 rev B shall be closed and re-instated in a manner to the local planning authority's written approval and constructed in accordance with the approved details.
12. No external lighting shall be installed on the stables or within the appeal site.
13. The development hereby permitted shall be used only as private, non-commercial stabling and for no other purpose.

*****End of Schedule*****