



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2025

by R Kent BA (Hons) MTP DipM MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P1750/W/25/3361090

Units 1 to 3 Camp Road Industrial Estate, 14 Camp Road, Farnborough GU14 6EW

- 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 Aldershot Homes Limited against the decision of Rushmoor Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00606/FULPP.
The development proposed is described as “Change of use of Unit 1 from mixed use Storage and Distribution/Retail, to Class 4 MOT vehicle and motorbike testing centre with ancillary offices (Use Class B2); continued use of Unit 2 as a vehicle service and repair premises with ancillary offices (Use Class B2); continued use of Unit 3 as a Class 7 MOT vehicle testing centre with ancillary storage (Use Class B2); retention of canopies outside Units 1 and 2, retention vehicle access gate on north boundary and new gate on south boundary and retention of boundary fencing and additional fencing”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal form indicates that the description of the development on the application form was revised. The description in the banner heading above is therefore taken from the appeal form which is also the same as that on the Council's decision notice. The site location in the heading above is also taken from the Council's decision notice as it more clearly describes the location of the site.
3. The description refers to the uses of units 2 and 3 having already commenced. It also refers to the retention of canopies outside units 1 and 2, and the retention of a vehicle access gate on the north boundary and the retention of boundary fencing. However, the retention of a structure or the continuation of a use is not in itself an act of development under section 55 of the Act¹. I have therefore dealt with the appeal on the basis that planning permission is being sought retrospectively for the use of units 2 and 3.
4. Although the vehicle access gate on the north boundary, the boundary fencing around the western side of the parking spaces and the canopies outside units 1 and 2 had been removed before I visited the site, they form part of the description of development. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis that they are part of the development for which planning permission is sought.

¹ Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

5. The description of the development refers to the uses of all three units as falling within Class B2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) (the UCO). Although some industrial processes may be permitted by Class E of the UCO provided they are of a type which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area, in this case the use of the units is classified in the description of development as falling within Class B2. Therefore, although the evidence makes reference to the use as MoT testing centres falling within Class E, I have determined the appeal on the basis that the uses which are the subject of the appeal would fall within Class B2.
6. Additional, amended plans prepared to inform pre-application discussions and for an appeal against enforcement proceedings were submitted with the appeal. The appeals Procedural Guide² advises that if an appeal is made, the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme. The changes to the plans would involve alterations to the parking arrangements on the site which have not been the subject of public consultation. Having regard to the *Holborn Studios*³ judgement, this could result in procedural unfairness if I were to take them into account in this appeal. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of proposed plans 24-2690-PX-100, 24-2690-PP-01 and 24-2690-PE-01 which were before the Council when it made its decision.
7. A Noise Impact Assessment dated 5 February 2025 was submitted with the appeal. This provides evidence responding to the Council's first reason for refusal but does not change the scheme. The Council's Statement of Case provides a detailed response to the Noise Impact Assessment including comments from its Environmental Health team. As the Council has had the opportunity to consider the assessment and has responded to it in its Statement of Case, I am satisfied that there would not be procedural unfairness if I take it into account in my consideration of the appeal and have determined the appeal accordingly.
8. I am aware of other appeals in relation to the same site⁴. These are the subject of separate decisions and I have considered this appeal on its individual merits.

Main Issues

9. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the development makes suitable provision for the parking of vehicles including its effect on highway safety;
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings; and
 - The effect of the development on the living conditions of occupiers of nearby dwellings with reference to noise.

² Planning Inspectorate 'Procedural Guide: Planning appeals – England' Updated 30 June 2025

³ *Holborn Studios Ltd v The Council of the London Borough of Hackney* [2017] EWHC 2823 (Admin)

⁴ APP/P1750/C/25/3361134, APP/P1750/C/25/3361135, APP/P1750/C/25/3361136

Reasons

Parking

10. The site is served off a cul de sac accessed through the adjacent public car park. The access road also serves adjoining residential accommodation and commercial uses with on street parking on it restricted by double yellow lines and hatching.
11. The proposed ground floor plan indicates six parking spaces along the western boundary of the site together with two further spaces allocated to unit 4. Four more car parking spaces are indicated outside units 1 and 2. The spaces outside units 1 and 2 would be beneath a canopy. The spaces outside unit 2 would also double up as two workstations. The proposed site plan shows four further parking spaces within the units.
12. Policy IN2 of the Rushmoor Local Plan 2019 (RLP) states that development will be permitted where, amongst other things, it provides appropriate parking provision in terms of amount, design and layout in accordance with the adopted 'Car and Cycle Parking Standards' supplementary planning document (SPD). Whilst the SPD is not part of the development plan, it is referenced in a development plan policy and therefore the guidance contained in it carries significant weight in this appeal.
13. The SPD sets out the maximum parking standards the Council applies to non-residential development. Although it does not provide a standard for MoT vehicle testing centres, it does set out the standards for staff and customer parking at car workshops. Whilst the levels of staffing and the turnover of vehicles being worked on may differ between MoT testing stations and car workshops and may also vary over time, both activities involve customers coming to the site and leaving vehicles for the operator to work on. It is also possible that both activities may have visiting customers overlapping with the preceding customer or have customers leaving vehicles at the site. The parking standards for car workshops therefore provide a useful indication of what would constitute a reasonable number of parking spaces for the MoT testing centre uses in units 1 and 3.
14. A maximum of three car parking spaces per service bay allows capacity for customers arriving early for an appointment to park vehicles on site. It also allows the operators to park cars awaiting collection. The use of two spaces outside unit 1 as waiting areas would be consistent with this. The two spaces outside unit 2 however would double up as external space for minor works and therefore would not necessarily be available for other customer parking. They therefore make a limited contribution to the availability of customer parking on the site and would be tantamount to extensions to the workshop floor space. As such, they would reduce the amount of space for parking but increase the number of vehicles which could be worked on and therefore the number of customers potentially visiting the site.
15. As well as workshops at ground floor, the proposed plans for units 1 and 2 show office spaces at first floor, including three offices above unit 1. Whilst the offices and welfare space above unit 1 are intended to service all 3 units, even allowing for staff multi-tasking, this nevertheless indicates that unit 1 could accommodate more staff than a single MoT tester.
16. Staffing numbers would vary according to whether the unit is used for MoT testing or vehicle repairs and may change over time. Therefore, whilst the gross external

floor area is only a general guide to how many staff the use of a building might require, it is nevertheless a recognised method of assessment used by other local planning authorities as well as the Council.

17. Even though it is proposed to operate the 3 units as one business, they remain separate units which could be operated independently from each other. Applying the standards in the SPD, units 1, 2 and 3 would require a combined number of 9 customer spaces based on one service bay per unit. Using the gross external floor area of each unit provided by the appellant, there would be a further requirement for at least a further 12 spaces for staff. The proposed site plan indicates a maximum of 14 spaces within the site boundary edged yellow meaning there would be a shortfall of 7 spaces based on the SPD standard. Of the 14 spaces within the site boundary, four are shown within the units and two more, those outside unit 2, would double up as spaces for carrying out minor works to vehicles. Those six spaces would not be readily available for customer parking which would add further pressure to the remaining available spaces.
18. Whilst principle 14 of the SPD states that non-residential parking standards are expressed as a maximum, the SPD also states that the standards provide an indication of the appropriate level of parking for different uses. The Council has provided photographs of the site from 2023, 2024 and 2025 which indicate the congested nature of the forecourt in front of the units and the haphazard nature of some of the vehicle parking on the site and the adjacent cul de sac.
19. The availability of parking on the cul de sac is restricted by double yellow lines and hatching as well as the need to keep clear the private accesses to other buildings. As a result, there is no on street parking space adjacent to the site to accommodate any overspill parking. The fact that the public car park or the appellant's other business premises are used on occasions to park a vehicle when a customer is unable to collect it, and there is no space available to keep the vehicle on site, is indicative of the problems caused by the shortfall in on site provision. Even though previous uses of the site might also have been the cause of parking issues in the vicinity of the site, that does not justify the harm which would be caused as a result in the shortfall arising from the appeal scheme.
20. Although the demand for on-site parking is reduced by some staff travelling to the site by public transport, sharing lifts or using the public pay and display car parks, I am not convinced that this would be sufficient to prevent congestion on site or in the cul de sac. Interested parties refer to parked vehicles obstructing the access to other properties and their parking spaces and whilst this may not necessarily be entirely due to the use of the site, the shortfall in parking would compound the problems which have been identified. Taken together, these issues demonstrate a clear and compelling justification for the use of the maximum parking standards.
21. I have given careful consideration as to whether the parking issues I have identified could be overcome by suitably worded planning conditions if the appeal were to be allowed. This includes a condition making the permission personal to restrict future operators as suggested by the appellant. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that planning permission usually runs with the land and it is rarely appropriate to provide otherwise. The development is not one of the examples of an exceptional occasion listed in the PPG and therefore even though a personal permission was previously granted to Lynchford Tyres, such a condition would not be appropriate in this case. Whilst a condition could be imposed

requiring the parking spaces to be provided and retained, this would not overcome the shortfall in spaces I have identified. Nor have I been provided with any sound evidence that an enforceable condition could be reasonably imposed to require that staff do not travel to the site by private car or that off-site parking is provided.

22. Therefore, for the above reasons, the development does not make suitable provision for the parking of vehicles and conflicts with RLP policy IN2 regarding parking being provided in accordance with the SPD.

Character and appearance

23. The site is located in an area of mixed development immediately to the east of Camp Road, which forms part of the town centre's primary shopping frontage. It is in a town centre location which has a distinctly urban character and appearance. A pedestrian link from the public car park to the east of the site to Camp Road runs past the southern boundary of the site. The site is visible from Camp Road along the pedestrian link and from the access road serving it.
24. As a result of their height and corrugated metal panel walls, the proposed canopies would appear as substantial, solid additions to the front of the building. Even though there are other commercial premises with a variety of building styles in the vicinity of the site and the canopies would have the benefit of providing protection from rainwater, the combination of their scale, form and materials would make them appear as discordant additions to the building.
25. Whilst the proposed fence, gates and planters would enclose the forecourt and help to contain the proposed parking and reduce its visual impact, for the reasons given under the first main issue, I am not satisfied that the congested and haphazard appearance of the site frontage would be resolved by the proposed parking arrangements. Combined with the incongruous appearance of the proposed canopies this means that the development would not make a positive contribution towards improving the quality of the built environment in this town centre location.
26. For these reasons the development would harm the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings and would conflict with RBLP policy DE1 which requires that new development makes a positive contribution towards improving the quality of the built environment.

Noise

27. Whilst there are other commercial and community premises in the vicinity of the site, there are flats along Camp Road which have windows and, in some cases, balconies facing towards the site and its surroundings. Dwellings in High Street also have rear windows and gardens facing towards the site.
28. Representations from interested parties refer to the noise and disturbance arising from the use of the units. This includes noise from revving of engines, car horns and alarms, grinding, cutting, and welding, some of which has taken place during evenings and on Sundays and bank holidays. However, I am also aware that construction work has taken place on unit 3 and on other sites in the vicinity and that another mechanic has worked nearby. These activities have created noise unrelated to the use of the premises.

29. The Noise Impact Assessment assesses the level of noise emanating from the units based on the workshop activities currently taking place and the roller doors and compressor currently used. It identifies the closest noise sensitive receiver as a residential window approximately 30m from the front of unit 2. In response to concerns raised by the Council about the methodology used, the appellant's evidence confirms that the conclusions of the report used a representative background noise level on a Sunday when the businesses were not in operation. The background levels at the monitoring location were also found to be representative of the levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.
30. The appellant's evidence also confirms that noise from the use of units 1,2 and 3 was not included in the background sound level against which the impacts of noise generated by the use of the units was assessed. Whilst the background sound level was assessed outside the units rather than at the receptor, there is only a car park and access way between the measurement location and the nearest residential noise sensitive window. The appellant's evidence suggests that the location was representative of the noise sensitive receptor and not significantly different to it. I have not been provided with any compelling evidence to arrive at a different conclusion.
31. The Noise Impact Assessment concludes that, based on the current use of the premises, the noise emissions associated with unit 2 exceed the background noise level and therefore mitigation for unit 2 is needed. The proposed mitigation includes ensuring that the doors to unit 2 are closed whilst work is being carried out in the unit. The appellant has confirmed that the roller doors installed in unit 2 accord with the specification in appendix D of the Noise Impact Assessment.
32. The canopies would provide covered space to allow initial manual vehicle diagnostic checks to be carried out. Examples of these activities include the changing of light bulbs, batteries, windscreen wipers and other items that do not require use of any powered tools. As a consequence, it is likely that these would not be a significant source of noise. Although interested parties suggest that noise has been generated by vehicle repair work outside the units in the past, I am satisfied that an appropriate planning condition could be used to limit this, and the hours of operation, if the appeal were to be allowed.
33. A plant room adjacent to unit 1 contains a compressor. The Noise Impact Assessment concludes that provided the compressor is enclosed by acoustic housing, the combined rating of all the activities would be below the background noise level. The enclosure of the compressor could also be secured by a planning condition if the appeal were to be allowed.
34. Notwithstanding reservations about the methodology used in the Noise Impact Assessment, the Council's Environmental Health Officer accepts that the use of units 1 to 3 could operate without a significant adverse impact on local amenity, albeit with some mitigation required. I am also satisfied that if I were minded to allow the appeal, appropriate planning conditions could be imposed to prevent a significant adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby dwellings. As a consequence, an otherwise unacceptable impact on the living conditions of nearby residents arising from noise could be made acceptable if the appeal were allowed.

35. Therefore, for the reasons given, the development would not have an adverse effect on the living conditions of occupiers of surrounding dwellings as a result of noise. It would therefore comply with policies DE1 and DE10 of the RLP in so far as they seek to prevent harm to adjacent users by reason of noise and ensure that any adverse impacts of noise would be adequately mitigated.

Other Matters

36. Whilst reference has been made to other planning applications and appeal decisions, including in respect of unit 4, I have not seen the full details of the cases referred to or their planning context. I have dealt with this appeal on its individual merits.
37. I am aware that there have been changes in the tenancy of the units and steps have been taken to address the Council's concerns, including the removal of a spray booth and HGV used as a shelter. I also recognise that the services provided by the operators are valued and supported by customers. However, these benefits do not outweigh the conflict with the development plan policies which I have identified and which carries substantial weight against the scheme.
38. Reference is also made to the manner in which the matter has been handled by the Council. This is something which can be pursued through other processes. It does not have a bearing on my consideration of the appeal.

Conclusion

39. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

R Kent

INSPECTOR