
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2025

by **P Brennan BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/25/3362193

Church Barn, Parsons Lane, Ewelme OX10 6HP

- 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 Jack Nethercott against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is P24/S2724/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as: Erection of Oak Framed Outbuilding for Agricultural Equipment Storage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Despite the appellant's initial suggestion that a site visit would require access onto the site, this was later amended in acceptance that the site could be adequately seen from public vantage points. Accordingly, the site visit was undertaken on this basis, and I am satisfied this was sufficient to enable me to make my observations.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including its effect on the Chilterns National Landscape.

Reasons

4. The proposed outbuilding would be located within a field that forms the northern boundary to a larger field adjacent to Church Farm to the southwest. Church Farm is connected by an access route to the appeal site and larger field, which crosses over a public right of way. The site is a paddock/arable field. The appeal site and its surrounding wider field is overgrown, includes a substantial number of trees and contains seating areas and a large pond. The southwestern area of the larger field is currently used as a forest school and has a wooden pagoda within it. To the west of the site is an orchard that includes a small storage building located adjacent to the boundary with Church Farm.
5. The field, including the appeal site, are part of the wider agricultural landscape that is located behind the built development on Parson's Lane. The built development forms part of the historic core of Ewelme. The appeal site sits at a higher level than the accompanying Church Farm and Parson's Lane. Beyond the northern boundary of the appeal site, the topography gently slopes downhill before rising again. The appeal site, as open land, forms part of the wider agricultural landscape

and therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area.

6. The site is within the Chilterns National Landscape (previously referred to as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). An existing public right of way runs along the western boundary of the appeal site. This continues beyond the site boundary to both the north and west. The appeal site is in the 2017 South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, as being located within the Open Rolling Downs. This is identified as an open arable landscape with high intervisibility, extensive views and a rural character.
7. The proposed agricultural building would be located towards the northeastern boundary of the appeal site and would be a relatively modest oak framed timber building. Most of the building would comprise enclosed secure storage and include a personal door and a wider opening with two doors. The remaining third of the building would be a canopied shelter. The proposal is of a design and material consistent with traditional agricultural buildings.
8. The site is open, surrounded by agricultural fields with no other buildings noticeably visible on the vista from the public footpaths. The forest school pagoda and the orchard's small storage building are located significantly closer to the settlement edge and existing buildings and are therefore read in that context. This contrasts sharply with the appeal site, which is read as part of the surrounding open farmland.
9. The existing boundary planting and trees on the site would partially screen the proposed building. Nonetheless, due to the site's topography, public vantage points from the adjacent public rights of way, its isolated nature and its position on the appeal site, the proposed building would be highly visible and prominent within the landscape. The proposed development, through its isolated positioning on the appeal site, would therefore be discordant with the open and rural character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding countryside.
10. With regards to the appeal site's location in the Chilterns National Landscape, I have given great weight to the duty imposed by Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of National Landscapes. The proposal, due to its positioning on the appeal site, would result in the erosion of the open countryside, would harm views into and across the site and would be harmful to the rural character and appearance of the area. Consequently, I consider that the proposed development would not conserve the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
11. Accordingly, I find conflict with Policies STRAT1, ENV1, DES1 and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (2020). These policies, amongst other things, seek development that would not have a harmful impact on local character; protects, conserves and, where possible, would enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness, and relate positively to its landscape and local setting.
12. The proposal would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which, amongst other things, seeks development that achieves high quality design that is sympathetic to and contributes positively to local character with regard to its surroundings and context and protects and enhances valued landscapes.

Other Matters

13. Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the LBCA Act) requires that the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, has special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
14. The wider site, of which the appeal site forms part, adjoins Church Barn, a Grade II curtilage listed property located on Parsons Lane. Initially an agricultural barn on land of the listed Farmhouse, the barn was converted in the late 20th century into a dwelling with extensions to the side. Due to the distance, topography, and lack of intervisibility between the proposed development and Church Barn, the appeal proposal would not harm the setting of the heritage asset, thus preserving its significance.
15. Furthermore, the appeal site is located outside of, but close to, the boundary of the Ewelme Conservation Area (ECA). Church Barn sits within the ECA. Therefore, the statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the LBCA Act is not applicable but the relevant policies in the Framework concerning designated heritage assets and their settings are.
16. The ECA is centred around the historic core of the village, which includes buildings ranging in date from the medieval complex of church, Alms-houses and school to modern dwellings constructed in the 1990s. Despite the limited heritage evidence submitted, the special interest and significance of the ECA is derived from the architectural richness and variety of its historic buildings. This special interest and significance are further underpinned by its agrarian past and the open and rural nature of the ECA's fringes and wider surroundings. The appeal proposal would not harm the setting of the heritage asset, thus preserving its significance.
17. Ewelme Parish Council and a Ward member support the proposed development on the basis that the appellant has provided land for a forest school which benefits local children, has increased the biodiversity of the site and requires equipment storage to maintain the land. These considerations weigh in favour of the proposal but do not outweigh the identified harm.
18. The appellant's evidence refers to unsubstantiated claims by the Council regarding the use of the land and proposed building. However, these matters have had no material bearing on my consideration of the proposal which has been assessed on its own merits based on the specific evidence before me.

Conclusion

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

P Brennan

INSPECTOR