
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 October 2025

by **R J Redford MTCP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/W/25/3367091

Dunwood Chipping Depot, Salisbury Road, Sherfield English, Hampshire SO51 6FF

- 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 P Earle against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00621/FULLS.
 - The development proposed is described as planning permission for the change of use of land for the use of Class B8 open storage in association with existing commercial use.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to relevant development plan policies relating to the countryside; and the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and the living conditions of nearby residential occupants with specific regard to noise disturbance.

Reasons

Location

3. The appeal site is an area of open space which is surrounded by an established bund and set behind an existing employment site which consists of a commercial unit and area of hardstanding with other single-storey structures on it. The existing employment site is accessible directly from Salisbury Road and is being used by 2 businesses. The majority of the employment site, including the commercial unit, is used by the truck mechanic business owned by the appellant, and the second, a skip and bag hire company, uses a smaller section of the hardstanding and the other structures on it. The appeal site is currently used by the appellant to store vehicles related to their business and is accessible via the existing employment site.
4. In effect the proposal seeks to secure the appeal site for open storage and vehicle parking¹, to be used in relation to the appellant's business.
5. This appeal site is outside of any defined settlement boundary and so in terms of the development plan is considered within the countryside. The Revised Local Plan (LP) Policy COM2, provides an overarching spatial strategy for development, and

¹ As described in paragraph 1.1 of the appellant's Design and Access Statement

for that outside of the boundaries of settlements it must be a) appropriate in the countryside as set out in specific LP policies; and b) essential to be located in the countryside.

6. The main parties agree that in reference to LP Policy COM2 part a), the most relevant policy is LP17 which deals with employment sites. This policy allows for the extension of buildings and the redevelopment of existing sites but expressly does not allow for the extension of existing sites. However, within the supporting text for Policy LP17, paragraph 6.92 recognises that employment sites are an important element of the rural economy and provide local job opportunities. Further it states, “proposals which involve the extension of the site boundary into the countryside would be considered on their individual merits.”
7. The importance of such sites is further emphasised in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
8. That the proposal would be linked to an existing business located on a lawful employment site and needs to be in proximity of it as it would provide parking for vehicles before and after they have been worked on, does not appear in dispute between the main parties. Thus, the proposal would comply with part b) of LP Policy COM2.
9. However, there is no substantive evidence clearly identifying the need for the additional open storage and vehicle parking nor how this would support the growth of the existing business. As such it cannot be concluded that it would support growth and productivity to the benefit of the local rural economy, so would fail to comply with LP Policy LP17 and COM2 part a). It cannot therefore be concluded that the appeal site is a suitable location for the proposed development in accordance with relevant development plan policies relating to the countryside.

Character and appearance

10. There are a series of public rights of way within the woodland to the rear of the site. However, these are separated from the appeal site by the vegetation within the woodland, and a private trackway which is on the other side of the bund. The bund itself increases in height as it extends away from the road and is covered in a mix of shrubs and trees all of which are well established. This provides good screening of the appeal site and existing employment site. Accordingly, the appeal site is not overly visible from the wider area, as it is well screened to the rear and side by the bund and woodland, and would be screened by the existing employment site from the road.
11. Nevertheless, although the bund and existing building provides good screening for ground level uses of the appeal site such as vehicle parking, it is clear that any form of stacked storage, such as containers or tall items, could be visible above the bund and this would be significantly impacting on the general verdant character and appearance of the local area.
12. The bund and landscaping could be protected by condition. However, there is no specific details of the storage proposed and no mechanism to limit the height or type of that storage before me. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the storage unfettered.

13. As such unlimited open storage on the appeal site would mean the proposal could have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore fail to comply with LP Policies E1 and E2 as far as they seek new development to integrate into an area's character and not have a detrimental impact on its appearance.

Living conditions

14. There are a series of residential properties surrounding the appeal site, the nearest being adjacent at Dunwood Fruit Farm, then 2 properties on the opposite side of Salisbury Road. There is a series of further dwellings on both sides of Newtown Road up to and around the Doctor's Hill junction.
15. The appellant has submitted a Noise Impact Statement (NIA) which has digitally modelled the impact of HGV movements on the appeal site, with their reversing signals turned off, for a singular 48-hour mid-week period. Nevertheless, although this may be relatively accurate for the vehicle parking element of the proposal it does not consider the unspecified open storage element.
16. Further, it is evident from the diagrammatic plans of the noise modelling that the noise propagation extends beyond the area shown on those plans and would potentially wash over and around the properties on the same side of Newtown Road as the appeal's site. Yet these properties have not been identified as receptors in the NIA. Equally it is unclear if the topography of the area has been taken into account, with interested parties commenting on the unique 'valley' form which channels noise. Therefore, I am not confident the NIA shows a realistic portrayal of the potential noise impact of the proposal on nearby residents. And as aural disturbance can have a significant impact on living conditions, it is necessary to take a precautionary approach on this matter.
17. Accordingly, the evidence fails to demonstrate an acceptable effect on the living conditions of nearby residential occupants in regard to noise disturbance. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with LP Policies E8 and LHW4, insofar as they seek to ensure pollution, in this case noise, does not cause an unacceptable risk to human health or general amenity of neighbouring occupants.

Other Matters

18. No harm has been identified by the Council in relation to access, highways safety and parking. Nevertheless, a lack of harm, by definition, cannot weigh for or against the proposal.
19. The proposal attracted a number of comments from interested parties. As the appeal is being dismissed for other reasons, these have not been pursued further.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above the appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and there are no sufficiently weighted material considerations, including the Framework, which would indicate a decision otherwise. The appeal is, therefore, dismissed.

RJ Redford

INSPECTOR