



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 September 2025

by **A O'Neill BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/25/3364514

Wigans Farm, Wigans Lane, Bledlow Ridge, Buckinghamshire HP14 4BQ

- 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 Gary Powell against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council
 - The application Ref is 24/07190/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a storage barn following the removal of stables.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the site is in a suitable location for the proposal with regard to the Council's strategy for the location of development;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including its effect on the Chilterns National Landscape; and,
 - whether the proposal would provide an adequate level of biodiversity net gain (BNG).

Reasons

Suitable Location

3. The main parties agree that the appeal site is located in the countryside outside of the Green Belt. Policy CP3 of the Wycombe District Local Plan, 2019 (the LP) sets out the Settlement Strategy and states that, in countryside locations, development will be restricted to that which is appropriate for the rural area. Further to this, LP Policy DM44 permits development in the countryside where it meets any of the criteria prescribed in the policy. Criterion c) of DM44 permits *"Additional buildings where these are required to support an existing rural enterprise or business located in the countryside, which are proportionate to the existing"*.
4. Although not cited in the refusal reason, the Council's case refers to Policy 1 of the Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan, 2017. This policy requires development outside of settlement boundaries defined in the Neighbourhood Plan to conform to the provision of the LP in respect of the control of development in the open countryside.

5. The proposed storage barn is for use in connection with the appellant's stunt co-ordination business which operates from Wigan's Farm, located a short distance to the south east of the appeal site. It is the Council's case that the appellant's business is not a 'rural enterprise' for the purposes of Policy DM44. However, the policy does not define 'rural enterprise', and I have not been provided with a definition by the Council.
6. The Council further asserts that there is no lawful business use at the appeal site. There is scant information before me about the operation of the appellant's business or the need for the proposed storage barn. Nevertheless, I am aware that planning permission has been granted for a storage barn, albeit in a different location on the site which is subject to a condition restricting its use in connection with the appellant's business only (Planning Application Reference 23/06690/FUL, 11 December 2023). Although Wigans Farm is not within the boundary of this appeal site, I consider the previous planning permission to represent a fallback position insofar as it relates to the principle of an additional building to support the appellant's existing business, within the context of Policy DM44.
7. I appreciate that the earlier planning permission also satisfied criterion j) of Policy DM44 as the storage barn would have been located on previously developed land. Whilst this would not be the case with the current proposal, compliance with the policy requires only one of the criteria to be met.
8. Taking all of the above into account, I conclude that the proposal does accord with the Council's strategy for the location of development. Accordingly, it does not conflict with LP Policies CP3 and DM44, nor with Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, as set out above.

Character and Appearance

9. The barn would be sited at the end of an existing access track from Wigans Lane which also provides access to Wigans Farm and another residential property, The Cottage. To the west of the site is an existing barn which has a similar appearance to that proposed. To the south is an area of hardstanding and the stables which would be removed as part of this proposal. The site is otherwise surrounded by undeveloped land interspersed with areas of tree cover giving it an open and verdant rural character.
10. The site is located within the Chilterns National Landscape, formerly known as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) (the CROW Act) requires me to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes. This is reflected in LP Policy DM30 which has similar aims for the Chilterns National Landscape.
11. The National Landscape is a living landscape encompassing a variety of character areas and a range of settlement types. Its special qualities include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich downland, broadleaved woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, the network of ancient routes, villages with brick and flint houses, globally rare chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures.
12. Whilst the site itself is relatively flat, the land to the north and east slopes down steeply, affording views across the wider landscape. In its current open and

undeveloped state, the land where the storage barn would be located contributes positively to both the open and verdant character of the area and the qualities of the National Landscape.

13. In this context, the storage barn would appear as a prominent and incongruous addition to the landscape. The proposal would result in an encroachment of built development into the countryside that would detract from the open character and appearance of the area, thereby also harming the natural beauty and qualities of the National Landscape.
14. This harmful effect would not be offset by the removal of the existing stables, owing to their modest scale and their positioning in relation to the other existing built development to the west and south. As such, the existing stables have a more limited visual impact and do not intrude upon the openness of the wider landscape to the same extent as the proposed barn would.
15. The planning permission previously granted at the site allows for a storage barn in the location of the existing stables. However, as outlined above, there are material differences between the site of the existing stables and the site of the proposed storage barn. Therefore, given the harm identified, I do not consider the earlier permission sufficient to justify the current proposal.
16. I appreciate that the Council has not objected to the appearance of the proposed barn, given it would be similar to the existing structure to the west of the site. I also acknowledge that the site is largely screened from the public highway and a nearby public footpath by mature trees and boundary vegetation. However, this does not alter my conclusion that the siting of the proposed storage barn would cause harm to the open character and appearance of the area and the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
17. Taking all of the above into account, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, and it would fail to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape. It would therefore conflict with LP Policies DM30 and DM32. Taken together these policies require development to protect and reinforce the positive key characteristics of the landscape and respect the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

BNG

18. Under Article 7(1A) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 ('the DMPO'), applications for planning permission are required to be accompanied by certain information relating to BNG. The objective of BNG is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.
19. As I have found harm in relation to another main issue in this appeal, my finding on this main issue is not determinative. However, if planning permission was granted, it would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition which requires the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP). The BGP sets out how the biodiversity gain objective of at least a 10% gain will be met. Planning Practice Guidance advises that consideration will need to be given to whether the biodiversity gain condition is capable of being discharged successfully through the

imposition of conditions and agreement of section 106 planning obligations to secure registered offsite biodiversity gains (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 74-002-20240214).

20. The appellant has submitted a BNG report and whilst the Council has raised concerns about the consistency of the data within this, it is common ground between the main parties that gains would need to be secured off site. It is suggested that this could be achieved by tree planting on other land owned by the appellant. However, I have not been provided with full details of this, nor any means by which off site gains could be secured. As such, I cannot be satisfied that the biodiversity gain condition is capable of being discharged successfully in this case.
21. I therefore find that the proposal would not provide an adequate level of BNG and it would conflict with Policies DM34 and CP10 of the LP and Policy DM14 of the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan 2013. Taken together these policies require development to protect and enhance biodiversity and ensure there is a net gain in biodiversity within individual proposals.
22. The Council's reason for refusal also refers to Policy DM13 of the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan. However, this policy concerns development affecting designated sites, habitats and species and it has not been explained how this is directly relevant to the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations that outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

A O'Neill

INSPECTOR