



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 October 2025

by R Sabu BA(Hons), MA, BArch, PgDip, RIBA, ARB

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/25/3369465

Hoo Farm, Chapel Road, Meppershall SG17 5NQ

- 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 & Mrs Parrish against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is CB/25/01508/FULL.
 - The development proposed is the closing up of two existing accesses and the creation of a new singular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have taken the above description of development from the application form and decision notice. However, I note that the Council have considered the development to include new access, car parking and turning area. I have considered the appeal on the same basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The site consists of a residential dwelling, grass verge and part of an open field. The proposal would be sited on the part of the site which is occupied by grass verge and open field.
5. Adjacent to the site lies open fields with farmland beyond. The Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2024) classified the wider area as Landscape Character 4C Upper Ivel Clay Valley. It describes the area as having a number of key characteristics including large and medium scale arable fields. The area to the south of the site is mostly consistent with this description. Accordingly, the area has a pleasant rural character and appearance.
6. There are agricultural buildings and residential properties opposite the site and industrial buildings in the wider area. However, the dwelling on the site appears to be the only building on the south side of this stretch Chapel Road. Furthermore, it is in close proximity to the arable fields and open countryside that characterises this landscape area. In addition, the proposed access would be sited on green verge and land that forms part of an undeveloped open field. While the green verge and field maybe in residential use and adjacent to a hedge, it is undeveloped and is in

keeping with the rural character of the surrounding area, particularly to the south. Therefore, the site has a closer relationship with the rural character of the open countryside on the same side of Chapel Road, than to the residential and agricultural developments opposite, or industrial developments in the wider area.

7. The proposal is for a single access to replace two existing accesses and a parking and turning area. The proposed parking and hardstanding would be sited along the side of the garage and would be considerably larger in footprint. Although the parking area would connect to the existing hardstanding, it would be sited on undeveloped land that appears to be part of an open field. It would therefore intrude into the open countryside, harmfully eroding the pleasant rural character of the surrounding area. The proposed parking area would be a short distance from the highway and would therefore be seen in public views. Moreover, the presence of additional parked vehicles on the site would erode the rural character of the area.
8. The proposed access would join the highway a significant distance from the existing dwelling which it is intended to serve. Lengthy driveways may not be uncommon in rural areas. However, in this instance, a large portion of the proposed driveway would be almost parallel with the highway and in close proximity such that both the hardstanding and vehicles using the access would be clearly visible from public views from the street. Whilst I note the lack of footpaths along Chapel Road, the intrusion into the open countryside would nonetheless be seen from the surrounding areas.
9. Accordingly, the proposed access and parking and turning area would introduce a significant amount of hardstanding into an undeveloped area and appear as a discordant intrusion into the open countryside. Moreover, the reduction in access points would not overcome the harm to rural character that would result from the additional hardstanding and likely increase in the number of parked vehicles.
10. Proposed landscaping is indicated on the drawings and within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report. However, the permanence and level of screening of the landscaping could not be guaranteed. A condition requiring further details of the proposed landscaping would not provide certainty that the hardstanding and likely parked vehicles would be hidden from the street. Details of the proposed gate could be dealt with by a suitably worded condition. However, this would not override the harm to the character and appearance of the area identified above.
11. Consequently, the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would conflict with Policies SP7, HQ1 and EE5 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015 – 2035 July 2021 (LP) which together seek to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and are complementary to the existing natural environment.

Planning Balance

12. The 2 existing accesses are adjacent to a tall hedge and the road bends some distance from the accesses in both directions. Accordingly, there is limited visibility from the accesses and vehicles travel at speed along the road such that there is a risk of collision between vehicles exiting the access and those travelling along it.
13. The proposal would replace the existing accesses with one access a greater distance from the dwelling, allowing greater visibility along both directions,

compared with the existing accesses. However, while I acknowledge the evidence relating to speed of traffic, information regarding the number of vehicles travelling along the road is not before me. Accordingly, the degree of risk of collision is uncertain. Nonetheless, as the proposed access would improve highway safety, I attribute moderate weight to this benefit.

14. The proposal would provide a greater parking area to allow users to turn and manoeuvre on the site without impacting on the existing mature tree. While swept path diagrams have been provided for the access from the road, evidence to justify the area required for turning in the parking area is not before me. Accordingly, I attribute limited weight to the benefit of highway safety arising from the additional parking and improved turning space.
15. The proposal includes biodiversity enhancements such as planting of trees and hedgerow to which I attribute moderate weight.
16. Given the significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, the material considerations identified above do not override the harm.

Other Matters

17. I note the evidence regarding the effect of the proposal on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties. However, given the harm identified above, this matter has not altered my overall decision.
18. I acknowledge concerns regarding the service provided by the Council. However, I have necessarily assessed the scheme based on its planning merits and this matter has not been determinative for my overall decision.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and in the absence of material considerations to indicate otherwise, the appeal is dismissed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR