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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2025

**by H Nicholls MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

**Decision date: 04 November 2025**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/25/3363888**

**Amethyst Fields, Crondall Road, Crookham Village GU51 5SS**

- 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 Sarah Thame against the decision of Hart District Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/01576/FUL.
  - The development proposed is construction of two- bedroom, self-build and custom build dwelling (following demolition of stables and storage buildings).
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. At the time that the appeal application was decided, the Council could demonstrate a five year supply of housing land as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, the Council acknowledged that this position would change with effect from 1 May 2025. The Council's Statement confirms it can no longer demonstrate a five year supply of housing land with relevant buffer. I find no reason to reach an alternative conclusion.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are:
  - whether the location of the development accords with local policies relating to the provision of new housing;
  - the effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
  - the effects of the proposal on designated heritage assets;
  - the effects of the proposal on the TBH SPA.

### Reasons

#### *Location of development*

4. The appeal site is located on the outskirts of Crookham Village and comprises a long, narrow section of land occupied by a timber stable block, separate timber storage building and hardsurfaced access. The site is bound on one side by a public right of way (PROW) and by a residential garden of a neighbouring dwelling on the other. The site accesses onto Crondall Road and other land in the ownership of the appellant used for grazing purposes extends to the north-west.

5. In respect of the site's location, policy SS1 of the *Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032* (adopted 2020) (Local Plan) sets out the spatial strategy and distribution of growth for the plan area and indicates that new homes beyond those already committed will come from development and redevelopment within the defined settlement policy boundaries, the Hartland Village scheme and through Neighbourhood Plan sites. The other sources of new homes supportable under Policy SS1 are rural exception sites located outside of defined settlement policy boundaries and other housing where it is essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside in accordance with Policy NBE1.
6. Policy NBE1 relates to development in the countryside and in respect of new dwellings, supports housing for rural workers, affordable housing on rural exceptions sites, replacement dwellings or the subdivision of an existing dwelling. It also permits the conversion of previously used permanent buildings or redundant agricultural buildings for appropriate uses. Footnote 17 further explains that an appropriate use in this context is one that is consistent with other development plan policies but offers no further clarity in the policy wording or preamble. Also of relevance is the support under Policy NBE1 for proposals which are located on suitable previously developed land (PDL) appropriate for the proposed use.
7. Policy SB01 of the *Crookham Village Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2032* (made 2021) (CVNP) sets out that development proposals which lie within settlement boundaries and are in accordance with other relevant policies will be supported. Areas outside the settlement boundaries will be treated as open countryside where only certain developments would be supportable, including rural exceptions schemes; farming and other land-based rural business development; extensions to existing businesses and dwellings; sustainable visitor attractions; small scale sustainable leisure activity or the development of local services and community facilities to support the rural community of Crookham Village.
8. The appeal site is outside of, but directly adjoining the settlement boundary for Crookham Village and is therefore in the countryside in policy terms. The parties dispute whether or not the site constitutes PDL and if it does, whether Local Plan policy NBE3 supports the residential development of such in countryside locations. The evidence and my findings on site point more towards the red line appeal site area having accrued PDL status since at least the construction of the stable block and storage building under the permission granted in 2017<sup>1</sup>. However, the appeal before me is not seeking a certificate of lawfulness of an existing use under S191 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and as such, my findings are not equivalent to such an outcome.
9. In respect of PDL redevelopment in the countryside, the preamble to Local Plan policy NBE3 says that development will be encouraged provided that the proposal would not cause harm to areas of high environmental value and that the proposed use and scale of development is appropriate to the site's rural context. Though the policy wording does not specifically prohibit general residential development, when taken with the other policies of the Local Plan, there appears to be limited instances where such would be of a scale and located in a manner that would be appropriate in its rural context.

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<sup>1</sup> Under planning reference: 17/02196/FUL

10. Drawing together the above points, the site does not fall under a category of development specifically supportable under Local Plan policies SS1 or NBE1 or CVNP policy SB01. As such, the location of the development does not accord with local policies relating to the provision of new housing.

*Character and appearance*

11. The two existing buildings have a similar single storey, pitched roof form and are both constructed from timber. One has a predominantly open frontage and the other is largely enclosed, save for stable door openings. The evidence details that the smaller building has a footprint of around 52sqm and the other has a footprint of 72sqm, with a gap of a few metres between the two. The appearance of the buildings is consistent with their function for purposes associated with an equestrian/rural use.
12. The existing two buildings would be demolished to make way for the new dwelling which would be single storey, linear in form and would extend over the footprint of the existing two buildings and intervening space. Whilst the linear form of the dwelling and low overall height would be reminiscent of the existing buildings, it would be longer, higher and bulkier. Furthermore, the introduction of three gable features, including the porch and large glazed feature windows, and the significant extents of additional glazing all but the rear elevation, would take the appearance of the dwelling to one of a more noticeably domestic and jarringly modern appearance. Whilst the dark timber clad external materials would attempt to give the dwelling a more muted and rural appearance, the effect would be undermined by the amount and distribution of glazed openings, and the domestic paraphernalia that they would reveal, the additional lighting at night time and increased comings and goings by occupiers.
13. The existing hedgerow that runs alongside the PROW filters some views into the site. However, the effects of this hedge are limited when one is travelling in a southerly direction towards the site or once one passes the extent of the hedgerow travelling north. The view attainable from this PROW is highlighted in the *Crookham Village Conservation Area Appraisal* (adopted 2024) (CVCAA). The proposal would result in harm to the users of the PROW through the increased prominence of the building and associated domestic paraphernalia. Due to the elongation of the enclosed area to form a rear garden, views from the PROW would also be affected for a greater distance without the benefit of filtering from the hedgerow and harming the transition to and views into the countryside.
14. In bringing this matter to a conclusion, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and would thus conflict with, in particular, policy NBE2 of the Local Plan, policies GEN1 and CON23 of the *Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006* (saved 2009) (Replacement LP) and policy BE03 of the CVNP. Collectively, these policies seek to ensure development is designed to be sympathetic to the site context and avoids adverse impact to the visual amenity and scenic quality of the landscape and PROWs.

### *Heritage effects*

15. The appeal site is adjacent to the Crookham Village Conservation Area (CA) and lies on the opposite side of the road from Brook House which is a Grade II listed building<sup>2</sup>.
16. Whilst S72 of the *Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (as amended) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of buildings and land within a conservation area, the Framework requires that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. As the appeal proposal falls within the setting of the CA, it is capable of affecting significance through setting effects. It could also give rise to harm to the listed building, Brook House, through development within its setting.
17. From the CVCAA and other written evidence<sup>3</sup>, I find that the CA principally derives its significance from its rural historic settlement character of agrarian origins and high concentration of buildings of special architectural or historic interest from different historic periods. These buildings are largely within 'The Street' and includes many C17 and C18 timber framed and vernacular cottages but are also to be found in the more dispersed part of the settlement along Crondall Road.
18. The pastoral land outlined in blue that is owned by the appellant encloses and runs into the settlement and gives it a rural context. The appeal site outlined in red is far smaller and already hosts some equestrian buildings that are partly visible from the streetscene. Nonetheless, the appeal site and the outlook over its associated pastoral land contribute in a modest way to the significance of the CA by forming a part of the rural context to the historic settlement. A view over this surrounding rural context is also highlighted in the CVCAA, despite being outside of the CA.
19. The appeal proposals would replace the discreet equestrian buildings with a bulkier building with more domestic and jarring appearance. It would also add further domestic paraphernalia into this streetscene context. As a result, the proposal would result in a minor harm to the rural settlement context and thus, a minor erosive effect on the setting of the CA.
20. Brook House is a building of probable 17th century origins located opposite the entrance to the appeal site. It sits in a large square plot behind a stone wall built along the Crondall Road boundary and has an interesting feature outbuilding at the roadside. The listing description notes the mixed form and ages of its built components, including its elaborate Dutch gable fronting Crondall Road and also remarks that its facade is probably the surviving part of a larger, probably symmetrical, design. The significance of the building therefore derives, in a large part, from its surviving built fabric, along with its architectural and aesthetic qualities as a status dwelling on the edge of a rural settlement and the CVCAA alludes to possible associative significance through connections to historic royalty.
21. The appeal site contributes to a minor extent to the significance of Brook House as a generally open site that forms part of the dispersed settlement pattern along Crondall Road that allows views and an appreciation of the surrounding

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<sup>2</sup> List Entry Number: 1262121

<sup>3</sup> Including the CVNP and submitted Heritage Statement (DCG Consultants) Ltd, July 2024

countryside but also allows Brook House to stand as a prominent building within the streetscene.

22. Insofar as there are already buildings on the appeal site, the appeal proposal and associated works would not materially alter the pattern of development. The increased scale and domestic character of the building and associated domestication of the curtilage would be a modest detectable change in views of and towards Brook House, amounting to a minor degree of harm to significance.
23. Drawing the above points together, the proposal would result in a minor loss of the significance of the CA and would have a minor erosive effect on the significance of Brook House. These harms bring the development into conflict with policy NBE8 of the Local Plan, saved policy GEN1 of the Replacement LP and policies BE03 and PA01 of the CVNP. Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that the pattern of development respects the CA, adheres to recognised good examples of traditional building forms and protects its notable views.
24. Under the terms of the Framework, the loss of significance to the CA and Brook House through development within their settings would amount to less than substantial harm, and at the lower level of such a scale of harm in each case. Local Plan policy NBE8 refers to the application of tests in the Framework where proposals would affect the significance of a heritage asset. I return to this below.

#### TBH SPA

25. The TBH SPA is a site designated under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* (as amended) (Habitats Regulations) for its network of heathland sites which support internationally important numbers of bird species<sup>4</sup>: Dartford Warblers. Woodlarks and Nightjars. These birds' nest on or near the ground and as a result they are very susceptible to predation, particularly by cats, rats and crows, and to disturbance from informal recreational use, especially walking and dog walking. Any proposal which by reason of its proximity of the SPA, within a 'Zone of Influence', that may result in additional recreational disturbance is likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.
26. The conservation objectives for the TBH SPA are to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features; the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features; the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely; the population of each of the qualifying features, and, the distribution of the qualifying features within the site. I have had regard to these objectives in undertaking my duties in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.
27. The appeal site is located within the 400m-5KM zone of influence for the TBH SPA. The proposal is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the protected site. However, the proposal, given its scale, nature and distance within the Zol of the protected site, would be likely to have significant effects either alone, or in combination with other projects. The effects of the proposal cannot, therefore, be screened out and in adopting a precautionary

<sup>4</sup> Qualifying species: A224 *Caprimulgus europaeus*; European nightjar (Breeding); A246 *Lullula arborea*; Woodlark (Breeding); A302 *Sylvia undata*; Dartford warbler (Breeding)

approach, the development would give rise to likely significant effects on the Protected Sites, such as to require an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations.

28. A unilateral undertaking (UU) dated 10 April 2025 has been submitted which secures an apportionment of 0.2 hectares of a Strategic Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at Moss End Farm, Bracknell, which is within the catchment of the appeal site. The owner of the SANG has confirmed sufficient capacity for the appeal dwelling. In addition, the UU also secures a separate contribution of £1039.68 towards Hampshire County Council towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) under the tariff payment arrangement in place in the County.
29. I am satisfied that these measures could mitigate the impacts on the TBH SPA such as to accord with the Habitats Regulations, policy NBE3 of the Local Plan and policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) which seek to ensure the integrity of the TBH SPA.

### **Other Considerations**

30. Though the site is outside of the settlement policy boundary for Crookham Village, it is directly adjacent to it and the appeal site is similarly close or closer to the modest range of facilities available than some neighbouring dwellings. The distance to the facilities within the village, including a public house, village hall, nursery and coffee shop, is around 330 metres and notwithstanding the rural nature of the short distances over which occupiers would need to travel, it is possible to access these facilities on foot or cycle from the site. Whilst the Council highlights that this range of facilities is limited, it offers some ability for residents to live within the community without needing to travel by car to meet all of their day to day needs. It is also evident that there are a wider range of facilities and services for shopping in nearby Fleet, Dogmersfield and Church Crookham, which whilst not all within easy walking distance, would at least be reachable by short car journeys. As such, relative to the scale of the proposal, its location would be sufficiently sustainable given its close relationship to the settlement of Crookham Village and neighbouring settlements and facilities.
31. The submitted UU also provides for the dwelling to be provided as a self-build dwelling. There are no policies requiring the provision of self-build dwellings on schemes below 20 houses, and thus, this aspect is at the appellant's discretion. Nonetheless, the Local Plan recognises that it is a form of development that should be supported and a register of those interested in acquiring plots for this purpose is separately maintained by the Council. Limited detail has been provided about the general need for such housing or whether the appellant is on any such register. However, the submitted UU would secure the dwelling as a self-build dwelling for the benefit of the appellant, addressing at least one household's need for a self-build plot.

### **Planning Balance and Conclusion**

32. The proposal conflicts with the development plan owing to its location, its effects on the character and appearance of the area and effects on heritage assets.
33. As the Council acknowledge it is incapable of demonstrating an adequate five year supply of housing land with appropriate buffer, the provisions of Framework

paragraph 11 d) are engaged. As a consequence, I attribute reduced weight to at least Local Plan policies SS1 and NBE3 which have a constraining effect on the delivery of housing.

34. Paragraph 11 d) of the Framework requires that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes.
35. As outlined above, the modest public benefits of the scheme include the delivery of a single self-build dwelling in a location well related to the settlement and in the context of an acknowledged housing shortfall. Further limited benefits would also result from the economic boost during the construction phase, and beneficial economic impact of future residents through their reliance on local businesses.
36. Under the terms of the Framework, neither the heritage effects or effects on the TBH SPA form strong reasons for refusal in their own right. However, the totality of harms taken together, including the effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and less than substantial harms to the significance of heritage assets, amount to adverse impacts that significantly and demonstrably outweigh the modest benefits of the scheme. As such, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
37. The benefits and other considerations advanced in favour of the scheme fall short of indicating that permission should be granted other than in accordance with the development plan when taken as a whole.
38. For the foregoing reasons, the appeal should fail.

*H Nicholls*

INSPECTOR