



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 October 2025

by **D Wilson BSc (Hons) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/25/3368882

Land at Westridge, Highclere, Hampshire RG20 9RY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Ms E Bowden against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00109/PIP.
 - The development proposed is application for permission in principle for residential development of 2 No. dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

5. The appeal site forms part of a large parcel of land which is currently an open agricultural field. There are dwellings close to the appeal site which generally follow a single-track lane and tend to be large and occupy significant plots. The wider area is predominantly open with large fields and pockets of woodland dominating the landscape which results in an open and verdant character and appearance.

¹ Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

6. The appeal site is located within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (the National Landscape). Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) seeks to ensure that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. Paragraph 189 requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes.
7. The appeal site is located outside of any settlement policy boundary and is therefore designated as countryside. Policy SS1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) Adopted May 2016 (LP) sets out a spatial strategy for the Council to meet its full housing need over the plan period. The strategy is principally based upon the development of allocated greenfield sites and the redevelopment of land in the towns and villages. Development in the countryside is generally restricted.
8. Policy SS6 of the LP relates to development in the countryside and outlines a set criterion for new housing outside of settlement policy boundaries. The proposed development would not meet any of these exceptions.
9. The appeal site is undeveloped and is therefore largely open and strongly contributes to the open and verdant character and appearance of the area and National Landscape. I acknowledge the appeal site's current use and the agricultural paraphernalia that is present, but this does not detract from its open character and appearance. The spacious gap that the appeal site provides, allows for the open and verdant character of the National Landscape to be appreciated from the road and public right of way, which would be eroded through the proposed development.
10. I am mindful that the details of the proposed houses, including their form and appearance are not before me and the plans are indicative. However, dwellings on the appeal site would be noticeable on approach from the road, particularly due to the elevated position and distinctly open character and appearance of the site. Therefore, even if the existing vegetation were to be retained and soft planting introduced, due to the small plot size and provision of an access that would be required, the dominant view would be the proposed dwellings and associated domestic paraphernalia. This would detract from the open character and appearance of the area and would not conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Landscape.
11. The appeal site is moderate in size and as such, two dwellings are likely to appear close together and occupy small individual plots when compared to the other dwellings in the area which are large and occupy significant plots. This would further detract from the open character of the area and would be particularly noticeable from the road and public right of way that passes by the appeal site.
12. Overall, I consider that the site is unsuitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development through its location outside of the defined settlement boundary and harm to the character and appearance of the area and National Landscape.

13. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would conflict with Policies SD1, SS1, SS6, EM1 and EM10 of the LP and guidance contained within the Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document July 2018 and the Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document December 2018. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure housing developments reflect local needs and ensure that development is sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area and positively contributes to local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

14. The appellant has referred to a number of appeal decisions in an attempt to justify the proposed development. I do not have the full details in respect of such examples so I cannot be sure of the circumstances. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits, based on the evidence before me.
15. In regard to the appeal decisions² provided, these all found that the proposals conflicted with the Council's spatial strategy which I have also found for the appeal before me.

Planning Balance

16. The proposal would be contrary to Policies SD1, SS1, SS6, EM1 and EM10 of the LP. Policies SS1 and SS6 of the LP are generally not consistent with the Framework as while they seek to support housing developments that reflect local needs, the Framework is less restrictive and as such, these particular Policies attract limited weight against the proposal. However, the other Policies are generally consistent with the Framework in seeking to ensure a presumption in favour of sustainable development and establish or maintain a strong sense of place to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live.
17. The Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites in accordance with Paragraph 72 of the Framework. There is some dispute between the parties in relation to the figure as the appellant has provided two different figures, however even if I were to consider the lowest figure provided by the appellant of 2.9 years, there is a significant undersupply. Paragraph 11 d) of the Framework indicates that, in such circumstances where the requisite housing land supply cannot be shown, the Policies which are important for determining the application should be deemed out-of-date and permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
18. The proposed development would contribute to the supply of new homes in a situation where there is a shortfall. While this contribution would be small, it nonetheless attracts significant weight in favour of the proposed development. There would also be some economical and social benefits through building out the scheme as well as supporting the viability of local facilities but due to the overall scale of the proposal, this only attracts limited weight.
19. There are facilities within the area that would allow some opportunities for travel without relying on the private car albeit there is no footpath, and the road is unlit from the appeal site. Nonetheless, access to facilities without the need for a private car attracts moderate weight in favour of the proposed scheme.

² APP/H1705/W/25/3360051, APP/H1705/W/25/3361213 and APP/H1705/W/22/3313185

20. However, in this instance, the inappropriate location and harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the great weight attached to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. As such, the proposal would not constitute a sustainable form of development in terms of the Framework.
21. Consequently, when assessed against the Policies in the Framework when taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion

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

D Wilson

INSPECTOR