
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: 10 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/25/3367849

Weybrook View, Aldermaston Road, Sherborne St John, Hampshire RG24 9JY

- 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 Miller against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01947/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of 2 no. commercial buildings for a flexible use (Class E or B8) and change of use of land from agricultural to storage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my site visit, I saw that the development has commenced, and I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area,
 - highway safety,
 - the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with regard to noise and disturbance,
 - flood risk, and
 - biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is a large parcel of land which is currently laid to hardstanding and used for the storage of cars. The site is set beyond some residential properties and is also within proximity of some commercial units. However, the wider area is distinctly open with wide reaching agricultural fields visible for a considerable distance which results in an open, spacious and verdant character and appearance.

5. The appeal site is located close to the edge of 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.
6. The Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Character Assessment May 2021 identifies the appeal site within Landscape Area 16: Basingstoke Down. It describes the landscape character as consistent with a large-scale pattern of fields with low, well-trimmed hedges. This reinforces the open, spacious and verdant character and appearance of the area.
7. The proposed development would result in a large area of land being used for open storage and also result in a commercial building which would appear alien in the context of the spacious character and appearance of the area. While the hardstanding and fencing might not be part of the appeal before me and may have been in situ for some time, the proposed use for open car storage would nonetheless highlight the change and result in a prominent commercial development that would be visible within the wider open context as well as from close up views from the public right of way, footpath and restricted byway near to the appeal site.
8. I acknowledge that the outside storage area is only partially visible from public vantage points, however, even such partial views are harmful in the context of the distinctly open and verdant character and appearance of the area. Landscaping has been introduced to provide some further screening, and I also acknowledge that that further landscaping could be required by condition. However, I am not convinced that this would mitigate the harm and in any case the extent of landscaping required would likely appear odd in the context of the open and verdant character and appearance of the area.
9. I note the golf course that is located adjacent to the appeal site, and while man-made it is distinctively open and vegetated which is appreciated from longer range views from within the National Landscape. It is noticeably different from the appeal site which has a commercial appearance and as a result of the large area of open storage is harmful to the open character and appearance of the area.
10. The key feature of the National Landscape is its openness, with views possible from the public rights of way that surround the appeal site which gives an appreciation of this openness. For the reasons outlined, the proposed development would erode this openness.

11. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policies EM1, EP4 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) Adopted May 2016 (LP), Policy 3 of the Sherborne St John Neighbourhood Plan 2011- 2029 as modified May 2024 (NP), Paragraphs 135 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), and guidance contained within the Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document December 2018. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that development is sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area, is well designed and positively contributes to local distinctiveness.

Highway safety

12. The proposed development is for a flexible use for Class E and B8, both of which have the potential to generate additional traffic. The appellant has provided some information in relation to vehicle movements which covers just over a month and therefore only provides a snapshot of these movements. As such, on the basis of this limited information it cannot be established that the additional traffic generation would not harm highway safety.
13. The appeal site is accessed from Aldermaston Road by an existing access, and I acknowledge that this has been used for some time and by slow moving lorries without change. However, in light of the limited information provided it cannot be established whether this access is suitable to accommodate any additional traffic or the types of vehicles that would be required.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm highway safety. It would be contrary to Policies CN9, EM10 and EP4 of the LP and Paragraph 116 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that developments provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all potential users and does not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Living conditions of neighbouring occupiers

15. The proposed use is wide ranging and includes outside storage. It is inevitable that such a use would generate noise from comings and goings through deliveries, collections, staff arrivals and departures as well as movements within the site. This is likely to be exacerbated due to the proximity of residential properties.
16. I note that the outdoor storage is proposed to be used for vehicle storage and that some information has been provided that relates to the number of vehicles parked and movements within the site, however this only covers a short period and therefore only provides a snapshot of these movements. There is no information to suggest that movements could not be higher or lower during different weeks and while I note a condition could be imposed, based on the limited information this would not be possible in the circumstances.
17. I also note that it is suggested that over half of the vehicles are electric and the only associated noise with these vehicles is tyre noise. However, there is no guarantee that the percentage of electric vehicles would remain the same and a condition restricting such would not meet the tests outlined in Planning Practice Guidance.

18. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with regard to noise and disturbance. It would be contrary to Policy EM12 of the LP and guidance contained within the Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document July 2018. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that development is not detrimental to quality of life and developments prevent any detrimental impacts in the form of noise and disturbance.

Flood risk

19. The information before me indicates that the appeal site is located upstream of a critical drainage area. While I note that the building proposed may be outside of this critical drainage area, other parts of the site would nonetheless be located within it. Policy EM7 of the LP states that sites located upstream of a critical drainage area would require a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).
20. No FRA is before me, and while I acknowledge that the surface material is porous with storm water drainage, in the absence of a FRA and specific details, it cannot be established that the appeal site would be safe from flood risk. I note that no comments have been received from the Lead Local Flood Authority, however, the absence of comments does not indicate support for the proposal and in any case, does not outweigh the requirements of Policy EM7 of the LP.
21. I therefore conclude that the appeal site would not be safe from flood risk. It would be contrary to Policy EM7 of the LP and Paragraph 170 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that development proposed in an area at risk of flooding will be required to be supported by a FRA and development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Biodiversity

22. The Council state that insufficient information was provided with the application to confirm that biodiversity net gain (BNG) can be achieved. In particular, the Council consider that BNG needs to be secured by a legal agreement. No legal agreement is before me as part of the appeal.
23. Under the statutory framework for BNG, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.
24. I note the Council's concern that BNG has not secured, however, a legal agreement could be secured during the discharge of the biodiversity gain condition. As such, the absence of a legal agreement at this stage is not a sufficient reason to refuse the development and there is no reason why, if necessary, this could not be secured during the consideration of the biodiversity gain condition, and this would need to be satisfied before any development could take place.
25. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would achieve BNG. I find no conflict with Policy EM4 of the LP and Policy 6 of the NP. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure development provides net gains for biodiversity.

Other Matters

26. I note that the appellant considered that the Council demonstrated unreasonable behaviour when considering the application and resulted in a complaint, however, I am only in a position to consider the planning merits of the appeal before me.
27. I note the need to diversify to maintain viability and as such, the proposed development would have some economic benefits, however, these would not outweigh the harm identified.

Conclusion

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

D Wilson

INSPECTOR