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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 September 2025

by **K Stephens BSc (Hons) MTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

**Decision date: 13 November 2025**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/25/3362940**

**Coopers Farm Barn, Bell Lane, Ellisfield, Basingstoke RG25 2QD**

- 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 Adrian De Ferranti against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/00449/FUL.
  - The development proposed is Demolition of existing agricultural building and erection of 1 no. dwelling and garage.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the Council's description of development from the decision notice, as it adequately describes the proposed development and omits terms and descriptions that are not definitions of development.
3. The appeal site is located near to the Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century Coopers Farmhouse<sup>1</sup>. There is an intervening 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuilding that is historically associated with Coopers Farmhouse. There is no dispute between the parties that the outbuilding is curtilage listed. Hence by virtue of section 1(5)(b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), the outbuilding shall be "treated as part of the listed building" of Coopers Farmhouse.
4. Under S66(1) of the Act, considering whether to grant planning permission, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [listed] building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
5. The appeal site lies outside but contiguous with the boundary of the Ellisfield Conservation Area. There is no statutory protection for the setting of a conservation area. However, a conservation area is a designated heritage asset and there is still a need to consider whether its significance would be affected by development proposed outside it.

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<sup>1</sup> National Heritage List for England: list entry number 1339530

## **Main Issues**

6. The main issues in this appeal are:

- The effect of the proposal on the setting of the Grade II listed building, known as Coopers Farmhouse, and Ellisfield Conservation Area (the ECA);
- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
- Whether there is sufficient mitigation against the impacts which might arise on the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Areas (the SPA) and Ramsar and Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (the SAC).

## **Reasons**

### ***Heritage matters***

#### *Special interest and significance of the heritage assets*

7. Coopers Farmhouse (the Farmhouse) is two storeys with red brick walling in Flemish Garden Wall bond and a ripped thatch roof. The curtilage listed outbuilding, potentially contemporary with the farmhouse being shown schematically on the Greenwoods Map of Hampshire of 1826 and reliably on submitted Ordnance Survey maps since 1894, forms a courtyard with the Farmhouse. It is a long linear building clad in black painted horizontal weatherboarding on a brick plinth, with a steeped pitched roof now clad in corrugated metal sheeting. From photographs submitted by the owners, inside its timber framing is still evident, as are some repairs. The building retains its simple form and some of its historic features, and its former agricultural use is still largely legible.
8. From the submitted evidence and my observations, the special interest and significance of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, are largely derived from its architectural and historic interests as an example of a vernacular farmhouse with small farmstead. The age of the buildings, their surviving historic fabric, and use of traditional construction and materials make important contributions in this regard. The outbuilding's historic and functional relationship with the Farmhouse means that it positively contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, as well as to the group value of the buildings in illustrating an historic rural vernacular farmstead.
9. Pertinent to the appeal, special interest and significance also stems in part from the setting of the listed building. Setting is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) as the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as an asset and its surroundings evolve.
10. From within the courtyard, the farmyard group of the Farmhouse and outbuilding allow the listed building to be experienced in an authentic way as an historic farmstead. Additionally, the adjacent and surrounding fields and countryside provide a wider setting in which to appreciate and understand the listed building's agricultural and rural context and hence contributes to its significance.
11. The appeal site, which sits to the south of the Farmhouse and curtilage outbuilding, sits on the edge of a large open field and comprises an existing modern portal-framed agricultural building and some areas of hardstanding and grass. The building is of no architectural merit and given its condition has a neutral effect.

However, the building's simple utilitarian and functional design nonetheless contributes to the agricultural setting of the listed building and understanding of the historic farmstead and its rural surroundings. Even without the building, the appeal site would still allow the listed building to be appreciated and understood in a wider agricultural setting. Hence, overall the appeal site positively contributes to the special interest and significance of the listed building. The appeal site is also located outside, but contiguous with, the southern limit of the ECA, which includes the Farmhouse, the outbuilding, and nearby dwellings ('Fair Views', 'Hedgerows' and 'Bell Lodge'). I am informed there is an ongoing review of the conservation area boundary to include the appeal site as the whole farm complex, but the parties agree this has no weight. Hence, I shall consider the appeal on the basis of the current conservation area boundary and that the appeal site lies outside it.

12. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, Ellisfield grew up around a number of separate small settlements, which in turn had grown up around farmstead complexes, including Coopers Farm. Located at the southern end of the ECA, the Conservation Area Appraisal (the CAA) refers to Coopers Farm as "relatively isolated from the main group, surrounded by more modern outbuildings". The old small settlements are linked by narrow lanes broadly east/west, which according to the CAA formed part of an ancient trackway across southern England. As replicated in the Council's Heritage Supplementary Planning Document (the Heritage SPD, historic farmsteads aid our understanding of agricultural history and of vernacular architecture, and of the evolution of settlements. and make .
13. I saw that development was generally dispersed along the axis of the ECA, with a variety of building styles and types, including farmsteads, surrounded by intervening open fields and woodland. Hence Ellisfield has retained its rural and agricultural character and appearance such that the rural connection with the past is still evident today. From the evidence and my observations, I find the historic significance of the ECA, in so far as it relates to this appeal, is largely archaeological, historic and architectural reflecting Ellisfield's agricultural past and evolution.
14. The appeal site and the agriculture building on it form part of a much wider field parcel and open agricultural setting and wider swathe of open countryside that forms part of the surrounding network of fields, which provides Ellisfield with its rural setting and links to its agrarian past. Hence, the appeal site positively contributes to the rural setting of the ECA and in turn to its significance.

### *Appeal proposal and effects*

15. The existing agricultural building would be demolished and replaced with a 5-bedroom dwelling with sizeable domestic curtilage around it. A driveway would be created off the existing track that would lead to the dwelling and a detached 3-bay garage building, with attached workshop and bin/log store and a first floor for storage with dormer windows in the pitched roof.
16. The loss of the agricultural building and replacement with a dwelling, on largely the same footprint, and in such close proximity to the listed building, would erode the visual agricultural association with the historic farmstead. This chimes with the guidance in the Council's Heritage SPD that, given that the functions of farm buildings and farm houses were directly related to agricultural land, development

on that land may adversely affect significance or the ability to appreciate that significance.

17. Whilst the dwelling may have been designed with a nod to the timber clad outbuilding, the overall composition of its design and features, including arrays of dormer windows, multiple gables, various roof elements, extent of fenestration, Juliette balconies and other decorative elements indicate an overly domestic suburban dwelling, rather than an agricultural building. Its design fails to successfully respect the simple and more diminutive domestic vernacular of nearby dwellings, including Coopers Farmhouse.
18. Even if consideration has been given to floor area and roof heights, the presence of a dwelling on the site would diminish the historic agricultural association between the appeal site and the heritage asset and undermine the authenticity of experiencing the listed building in its agricultural setting. It would also disrupt the primacy and hierarchy of the farmhouse in this historic farmstead grouping. The erosion of the agricultural setting would thus harm the special interest and significance of the listed building.
19. The proposal would also involve an extensive area around the proposed dwelling, extending southwards towards the open field. The likely resultant domestic paraphernalia, such as potential flower beds and garden planting, seating areas, sheds and washing lines, would detract from the agricultural setting of the listed building and how it is experienced with the surrounding agricultural land.
20. Similarly, in terms of the ECA, the erection of a dwelling, although set back from Bell Lane, would erode the agricultural character and appearance of the area at this end of the ECA where Ellisfield adjoins the wider countryside. This in turn would reduce the agricultural setting to the edge of the village. As the agricultural and countryside setting is an integral part of the conservation area, it follows that its heritage significance would be harmed by the proposed dwelling. Even if views of it would be limited from parts of Bell Lane and the wider area, this does not mean the development is not capable of causing harm.
21. Overall, I find the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building and the setting of the Ellisfield Conservation Area. As a result the proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the relevant provisions of the Framework. The proposal would also conflict with Policy EM11 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 (the Local Plan). It would also be contrary to the guidance in the Council's Heritage SPD (2019).

### *Public Benefits and Heritage Balance*

22. Paragraph 202 of the Framework states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 212 that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. As set out in paragraph 213 any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, including from development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification.
23. In finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, Framework paragraphs 214 and 215 require the magnitude of that harm to be assessed. Given

the nature and extent of the proposed development and against the guidance in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG), I find in this case that the harm to both the significance of the listed building and Conservation Area would be 'less than substantial' at the moderate end. Nonetheless, this harm still carries considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 215 of the Framework requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

24. As the Council cannot demonstrate it has a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land, the proposed dwelling would help address the Council's housing shortfall. There would also be some associated short-term economic benefits from jobs and the supply chain during the demolition and construction phases and some longer-term spending by future occupiers, at least some of which would likely be spent in the local area and support local services and facilities. There would also be some benefits to the wider environment with opportunities for biodiversity net gain including from new tree and hedgerow planting and provision for bats and birds. The dwelling would apparently be built to the highest standards of energy efficiency. Whilst there are few details of such measures, it has the potential to reduce energy consumption and help towards reducing carbon emissions.
25. The public benefits identified above weigh in favour of the proposal. However, due to the scale and nature of the proposal for a single dwelling they would be limited and modest. As such, I find they would not amount to public benefits sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and great weight I attach to the harm that would be caused to the designated heritage assets. I find that clear and convincing justification for the harm to the listed building's significance has not been provided. Accordingly, the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building and the setting of the Ellisfield Conservation Area.

### ***Character and appearance***

26. Following a Landscape Assessment in 2000, a number of Landscape Character Areas (LCA) were identified within the Borough. The appeal site and conservation area fall within the Landscape Character Area 19 "Ellisfield Clay Plateau and Valley". The Council's Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (the Landscape SPD) has amalgamated the LCAs into 6 Design Areas that have similar implications for the design of new buildings. The 'Chalk and Clay Downs' Design Area is characterised by rolling chalk downland, a flat dry plateau with a ridge and valley landscape, and woodland that serves to make the landscape more enclosed. Settlements tend to be small and dispersed and linear in nature, as I saw was the case with Ellisfield. The area generally has medium-to-large scale arable fields and blocks of woodland, and has a generally quiet, unspoilt rural character, which was evident on my visit to the site and surrounding area. Buildings are described as being domestic in character, with many built as farmhouses and farm workers' cottages, as is the case with Coopers Farmhouse and nearby cottages Fair Views and Hedgerows.
27. Located towards the southern end of the village, surrounded by fields and set back from the road, the appeal site positively contributes to the agricultural landscape character and appearance of the area.
28. The proposal would see the removal of the agricultural building and the erection of a dwelling with an overly suburban appearance, with large detached garage and



surrounding domestic curtilage and likely domestic paraphernalia. The appeal site is set back from the road such that the proposed dwelling would be contrary to the prevailing linear pattern of development that largely faces the road, such as 'Fair Views' and 'Hedgerows'. There are partial views of the site from Bell Lane. The proposed domestic building would be an unduly prominent feature on the edge of the fields and the village that would erode the largely unspoilt rural character and appearance of the area where the village melds with the surrounding countryside. Even with some planting around part of the site, the agricultural character and appearance of the site would be lost.

29. As already described above, the proposed dwelling would not reflect the local vernacular of residential properties in the immediate vicinity. Even Coopers Farmhouse, the principal building of the historic farmstead, has a simpler and more diminutive design than the proposed dwelling.
30. I accept the proposed dwelling would be sited in the vicinity of other buildings and dwellings so would not be isolated, and that change to an area does not automatically equate to harm. However, the cumulative effect of the design and form of the dwelling with its separate garage building and domestic curtilage would represent an unduly suburban form of development that would be visually intrusive in the surrounding agricultural landscape and erode the distinctive character and appearance of this LCA. It would also be at odds with one of the landscape aims for this LCA, which is to "limit the increase in urbanisation to maintain the quiet unspoilt rural character and sense of remoteness".
31. Accordingly the proposal would be contrary to Local Plan Policies EM1 and EM10. Together these seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development positively contributes to local distinctiveness and respects the sense of place and is not detrimental to the character or visual amenity of the landscape likely to be affected. Development should also have due regard to the scale, appearance and history of the surrounding area and relationship to neighbouring buildings, landscape features and heritage assets. It would also be contrary to the Landscape SPD.
32. Whilst the proposal has been amended during the course of its determination and the dwelling reduced in size, it is not my remit to compare the schemes.

***Whether sufficient mitigation for designated habitat sites***

33. The Solent water environment is internationally important and is protected under Water Environment Regulations and the Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations, as well as national protections. The appeal site lies within the Itchen sub-attachment although the River Test and River Itchen catchments are considered a single outfall location and Ellisfield lies within the River Itchen catchment.
34. There are already high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus nutrients in these waters and recognised evidence indicates these nutrients are causing eutrophication of the waters. New dwellings mean there are more people to impact on nutrients and protected habitats due to waste water implications. Nutrient neutrality is a strategic approach to mitigation, designed to enable Local Planning Authorities to grant permissions for development without harming habitat sites through elevated nutrient levels. Natural England has issued advice highlighting the need to consider nutrient impacts of any development on these protected habitats and to consider whether mitigation measures are needed.

35. For the application, the appellant submitted details in relation to nutrient neutrality but the calculations were incorrect having been based on the wrong curtilage. Therefore the applicant could not demonstrate that nutrient neutrality could be achieved, and thus there would be likely harm to the protected waters.
36. The Council has since considered various new documentation from the appellant as part of a Habitat Regulation Assessment/Appropriate Assessment application. Whilst that is not before me, the Council states it has no queries with the documents submitted and no concerns about the proposed mitigation. However, the mitigating land would need to be secured through a S106 legal agreement<sup>2</sup>. Whilst the appellant has expressed their willingness to enter into a S106, this cannot be secured by condition. As a S106 has not been submitted with the appeal, there is insufficient mitigation to protect the designated habitat sites. As I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I do not need to pursue this matter further.
37. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policy EM6 of the Local Plan, which seeks to protect, manage and improve the water quality of the borough's water environment, with groundwater quality for sites within the Test Catchments of great concern.

### **Other Matters**

38. The appellant has provided an appeal decision<sup>3</sup> that was allowed for a site in Somerset to change the use of a grain store into 5 dwellings under Class Q<sup>4</sup>. Apart from it relating to a different part of the country and a different Council, the submitted appeal decision is not for a planning application and does not involve replacing an agricultural building with a dwelling. Hence, I cannot make any meaningful comparisons with the appeal scheme before me. In any event, I must consider the appeal proposal on its own merits.

### **Planning Balance**

39. As the Council is unable to demonstrate it has a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land, paragraph 11d) of the Framework is engaged. This means that planning permission should be granted, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
40. The proposed dwelling would contribute to meeting the Council's unmet housing need and help achieve the Framework's aims to boost the supply of homes, recognising the contribution small sites can make to that. I have no reason to doubt the dwelling would not be built out quickly. However, one dwelling would only attract moderate weight, as would the associated socio-economic benefits.
41. Whilst there are no substantive details or quantification of the intended energy efficiency measures upon which to meaningfully comment, the Framework nonetheless requires significant weight to be given to the need to support energy efficiency.

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<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

<sup>3</sup> APP/E3335/W/23/3322473 dated 19 June 2024

<sup>4</sup> Class Q of Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

42. The site already has a building and hardstanding. Whilst the Framework gives substantial weight to the effective use of land for homes within settlements, land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings is not defined as brownfield or previously developed land<sup>5</sup>.
43. The appellant states there would also be less agricultural traffic movements, but there is no substantive evidence before me to indicate agricultural traffic movements at the site in a rural agricultural area are causing problems to the local road network or the amenity of nearby residents.
44. The Framework requires great weight to be given to a heritage asset's conservation. I have found that the harm caused to the setting of the listed building and Ellisfield Conservation Area would not be sufficiently outweighed by the public benefits that would accrue from the proposal. The proposal would also harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and be contrary to the Framework's aims to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Without the necessary mitigation, the protected SPA and SAC habitats would not be protected, as the Framework requires.
45. It is not disputed that the site lies outside the settlement boundary of Ellisfield and hence in open countryside for policy purposes. There are no policy exceptions put forward to allow the proposed new-build dwelling in such a location. To do so would undermine the Council's spatial strategy and go against one of the aims of the Framework of promoting sustainable patterns of development.
46. However, both the Council and appellant consider the extant prior approval<sup>6</sup> under Class Q to convert the existing agricultural building into a dwelling represents a realistic 'fallback' position and establishes the principle of a dwelling on the site. The extant prior approval, if implemented, would deliver a single dwelling and achieve the same aim of reducing the Council's housing deficit by the same amount as the proposed new dwelling, the subject of this appeal.
47. From the planning history, the appellant has submitted a number of proposals to change the existing agricultural building into a dwelling. A more recent Class Q Prior Approval<sup>7</sup> has been submitted to convert the same existing agricultural building into 5 dwellings. The appellant has therefore expended time and cost over the years in submitting various applications, which indicates to me the appellant is committed to developing the existing building for some form of residential use. Therefore, there is a reasonable prospect of prior approval being carried out.
48. However, for significant weight to be afforded to a fallback position, there needs not only to be a reasonable prospect of it being carried out in the event the appeal is dismissed, but it would also need to be equally, or more harmful, than the scheme for which planning permission is sought.
49. A prior approval is not a planning application. As the PPG explains prior approvals "*are much less prescriptive than those relating to planning applications. This is deliberate, as prior approval is a light-touch process*". Prior approvals are determined under a different legislative regime and are not subject to the same rigours, planning principles, policies and the development plan as a planning

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<sup>5</sup> See Framework Annex 2: Glossary

<sup>6</sup> LPA ref: 23/00248/GPDADW granted 17 April 2023

<sup>7</sup> LPA ref: 25/00449/GPDADW refused 23 May 2025



application. There is some reference in the appellant's evidence to the proposal being a replacement dwelling. But that cannot be the case as the extant prior approval has not yet been implemented and so the existing building is still an agricultural building and not in use as a dwelling.

50. Another factor is that a successful Class Q prior approval can only involve certain types of building operations to be carried out that are reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse. There are further limitations on changes to the design and external appearance of the building. The submitted plans of the appellant's extant prior approval scheme show minimal alterations would be made to the external appearance and the elevations of the existing building to create a single dwelling. As a result, the appearance, form, bulk and massing of the existing building would not be significantly altered and the existing building would retain its agricultural appearance, form and feel after conversion. This is a very different scenario to the planning appeal before me that seeks to demolish the agricultural building and in its place erect a new-build dwelling that would have a very different appearance, shape and form compared to the more limited prior approval scheme. Whilst the existing building is not of any architectural merit it nonetheless reflects its agricultural form and function - the extant prior approval would not significantly alter that, as is the intended nature of Class Q conversions.
51. Furthermore, the prior approval scheme has a significantly smaller red-line site area than the application site for the proposed new dwelling. With a smaller site area, less of the appeal site would be developed under the prior approval scheme, which in turn means there would be less scope for a domestic garden, domestic paraphernalia and visual intrusion into the countryside.
52. Moreover, I have found that the resulting removal of the existing agricultural building and erection of a new dwelling in its place would harm the significance of the nearby heritage assets and the character and appearance of the area.
53. Taking these various factors into account, the dwelling that would result from the extant prior approval would be less harmful than the scheme for a new-build dwelling for which planning permission is being sought. Consequently, the fallback scheme cannot be afforded significant weight.
54. To conclude, I have found the proposal would cause harm to heritage assets, the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and there would be insufficient mitigation to protect habitat sites. The proposal would conflict with a number of development plan policies and with the development plan as a whole. The public benefits and material considerations, including the Framework, I outline above are not sufficient to outweigh this conflict. Under footnote 7 of the Framework, the application of policies relating to designated heritage assets in the Framework also provide a strong reason in this instance to refuse permission.

## **Conclusion**

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

*K. Stephens*  
INSPECTOR