Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2025

by Ryan Cowley MPlan (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W4705/W/25/3372837
Howbeck Farm, Street Lane, West Morton BD20 5UP

- 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 Messrs Richard Waite and Amar Sattar against the decision of City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.
- The application Ref is 25/01478/FUL.
- The development proposed is hardstanding track.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Messrs Richard Waite and Amar Sattar, against City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council. This is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. I saw at the time of my site visit that the hardstanding track had already been laid. The appeal is thus considered retrospectively.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the landscape character of the area.

Reasons

5. The site comprises agricultural land in the open countryside. It sits on the northern side of the valley within Airedale. The wider field within the appellant's ownership includes a large agricultural building sited towards the south-west corner, which was recently granted prior approval[1]. The field is largely enclosed by low stone walls while the western boundary is lined by trees and other vegetation. I saw on my site visit that the surrounding area is characterised by agricultural fields, predominantly pasture, interspersed by small patches of woodland and tree belts, with some scattered farmsteads and small hamlets or villages.

6. The Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Volume 1: Airedale October 2018 describes this part of Airedale as having a balanced structure of pasture, wall and hedge enclosure with field and tree groups. The enclosed pastures are in good condition overall and the SPD seeks to conserve

[1] Council Ref 24/00434/PNA

the balanced landscape character of small tree groups, walls and hedges, and resist the introduction of fences particularly in small field divisions.

7. I saw during my site visit that the development is clearly visible from the public right of way to the west. The SPD also highlights the many notable panoramic views of Airedale along the route from East Morton towards Silsden, which the appeal site can be seen from. Moreover, nearly all the pastures in this area are visible from elevated positions on the south side of Airedale. The site is visually exposed and the SPD describes this area as moderately sensitive to development

8. The development comprises a "y" shaped access track constructed of limestone chippings that cuts across a central part of the field and extends to the edge of the neighbouring field, with a spur to the recently constructed agricultural building. It is flanked on one side by a double row of wire fencing and timber posts, with a newly planted hedgerow between.

9. I recognise that the materials used are not uncommon in a rural setting and the development does not include significant built form above ground level and as such does not significantly impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Nevertheless, the track has replaced the natural grassland with hardstanding material and is poorly related to field boundaries and existing structures. It is of considerable length, rising higher up the valley side than if it were to have taken a more direct route across the edge of the field. Given the site's prominent position and the extent of the development, it is thus a conspicuous incursion into the interior of the field that detracts from the traditional pastoral landscape character.

10. The parties agree that the track has been designed for agricultural purposes. Nevertheless, while the appellant maintains that it is functionally necessary, the track extends further into the open field than required to access the recently constructed building. The appellant indicates that this was for economic reasons, and to provide better access to the adjacent field and coops. However, it is not clear why the approved track, which was more direct and closely aligned to the field boundary, was unsuitable for this purpose. Ultimately, substantiated evidence has not been presented to show that the route and extent of the track as constructed is proportionate and necessary for the operation of the enterprise.

11. My attention has been drawn to 2 appeal decisions for access track development in this area. The full details of either case are not before me. Nevertheless, from the evidence provided, both are in different parts of the district and thus considered in a different context. The access track at Chestnut Acres[2] was part of a wider development, and the Inspector ultimately found there to be only modest visual impact. The Inspector in the Apperley Lane[3] case found views of that site from the wider countryside to be limited, and within the context of its urban edge character. I find neither case to be directly comparable to the appeal scheme before me and they do not lead me to a different conclusion on the main issue.

12. The development thus has a harmful effect on the landscape character of the area. It is contrary to Policies EN4 and DS2 of the Bradford District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) Adopted July 2017. These policies, among other provisions, seek to ensure that development decisions and proposals make a positive contribution towards the conservation, management and enhancement

[2] Appeal Ref: APP/W4705/W/23/3318553
[3] Appeal Ref: APP/W4705/W/24/3345778

of the diversity of landscapes within the district, including Airedale, take advantage of existing features and integrate development into the wider landscape.

Other Matters

13. The National Planning Policy Framework supports sustainable development and paragraph 8 highlights that this comprises three elements: an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. These are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

14. The development would serve the farming enterprise and provide better access, though it has not been demonstrated that a track along the route and of the extent constructed is necessary to achieve this. This therefore carries limited weight as an economic benefit. Tree planting already carried out on site contributes towards the enhancement of the landscape character and carbon off setting. This must however be weighed against the landscape harm, and it is unclear whether this would have occurred in any event, had the track not been constructed in its current position. It is thus a limited environmental benefit of the development.

15. Given the identified harm, the social and environmental objectives of sustainable development, including fostering well-designed places and protecting and enhancing the natural environment, have not been achieved. Overall, I find the modest benefits of the development do not outweigh the identified harm and development plan conflict.

16. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) require that, where a project is likely to have a significant effect on a European habitat site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), the competent authority must make an appropriate assessment of the project's implications in view of the relevant site's conservation objectives.

17. The Council indicates that the site is situated within the supporting habitat management zone of the South Pennine Moors Special Protection Area. Within this zone, it is recommended that new development must avoid direct and indirect impacts on supporting habitats, and it is required to implement an adequate programme of management and mitigation measures. Notwithstanding this, Regulation 63(1) indicates that an Appropriate Assessment is only necessary where the competent authority is minded to grant consent. As I am dismissing the appeal on other grounds, and as this would be a neutral factor at best, it is not necessary for me to consider this matter further.

18. While the proposal may comply with other elements of local or national planning policy, the absence of harm or development plan conflict with respect to other relevant matters weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

19. The development conflicts with the development plan, taken as a whole. I have found no material considerations that indicate the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Ryan Cowley

INSPECTOR