



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 November 2025

by Laura Cuthbert BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/25/3371018

Land north of Woods Lane, Cliddesden RG25 2JF

- 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 Rosemary Ann Cooper against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01215/PIP.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 4 detached single dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for the erection of 4 detached single dwellings at Land north of Woods Lane, Cliddesden RG25 2JF in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/01215/PIP.

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 ('permission in principle') establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and the second stage ('technical details consent') 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 permitted. 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.
4. In respect of residential development, an applicant can apply for permission in principle for a range of dwellings by expressing a minimum and maximum number of net dwellings as part of the application. In this instance, permission in principle has been sought for the erection of a maximum of four dwellings at the appeal site. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal on that basis, having regard to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017 and the PPG.
5. Whilst it has not been cited as a reason for refusal, the Council's evidence indicates that the proposal conflicts with the local development strategy for housing delivery, particularly in relation to new housing in the countryside. Given the implications of this matter and its relevance to my assessment, I must reach my own conclusions on this issue before applying the planning balance. Accordingly, I will treat this as a main issue in my reasoning below.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are whether the location, the proposed land use and the amount of development is suitable, with particular regard to:
- whether the proposed development would provide a suitable location for housing, having regard to the development strategy for the area;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the effect on the significance of the designated heritage asset of Cliddesden Conservation Area (CA), by virtue of development within the setting of the CA.

Reasons

Suitable Location

7. The appeal site lies outside the defined Settlement Policy boundary of Cliddesden. Policy SS1 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011–2029 (adopted 2016) (the Local Plan) sets out the local strategy for housing delivery, directing development to Settlement Policy Boundaries and allocated sites, while resisting encroachment into rural areas. It confirms that sites outside these boundaries are considered to be in the countryside. Exception sites may be permitted where they meet criteria in other policies or where it is essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside.
8. Policy SS6 of the Local Plan outlines the circumstances in which new housing in the countryside may be permitted, which includes ‘small scale residential proposals of a scale and type that meet a locally agreed need’. The Council’s guidance note¹ on ‘locally agreed need’ requires proposals to objectively demonstrate a need at a local level, supported by a comprehensive assessment of requirements within the parish or settlement, and to show that the scale, size, and type of homes proposed respond to that need.
9. The appellant refers to an earlier appeal decision in Cliddesden², where the Inspector acknowledged a policy-defined local need for at least 10 dwellings under Policy SS5. At that time, the village lacked an advanced Neighbourhood Plan, so the need was unmet. However, that appeal was dismissed, and the Inspector concluded that the proposal remained contrary to Policy SS6 due to harm to the character and appearance of the area, which reflects the Council’s current position under the appeal proposal.
10. I note that the Cliddesden Neighbourhood Plan (2022–2039) (the Cliddesden NP) has since been adopted, although it does not allocate housing sites, and that recent permissions for new dwellings have been granted. However, it is unclear how these permissions affect the outstanding need for ‘at least 10 dwellings’. Nevertheless, even taking the above decision into account, while a policy-defined local need may still exist, no objective evidence has been provided to demonstrate a particular local need for the scale, size, and type of homes proposed.
11. On the evidence before me, although the proposal would contribute to meeting housing need in the borough, it has not been shown to address a specific local

¹ Appendix 4 of the Council’s Statement of Case

² Reference APP/H1705/W/23/3321532

need in accordance with the Council's guidance. Consequently, it would fail to meet any of the exceptions under Policy SS6.

12. I acknowledge the Council's view that the site is not isolated and would represent a sustainable form of development with access to services and facilities either locally or via limited car journeys and public transport. I have no evidence to reach a different conclusion on these matters.
13. Nevertheless, for the reasons set out above, the proposed development would not provide a suitable location for housing, having regard to the development strategy for the area. It would conflict with Policies SS1 and SS6 of the Local Plan, which together seek to focus new housing within settlement boundaries and restrict development in the countryside except where specific criteria are met, which this proposal does not achieve.

Character and Appearance

14. The appeal site comprises a rectangular parcel of land, situated outside of but close to the settlement boundary of Cliddesden. It currently contains paraphernalia associated with dog agility activities and a small area for keeping chickens. The site lies to the north of Woods Lane, with the designated settlement boundary of Cliddesden located on the opposite side of the lane, forming the western edge of the village. The site also falls within the Local Gap identified in the Cliddesden NP under Policy ENV1, the purpose of which is to prevent coalescence between Cliddesden and Basingstoke and to retain the individual identity of Cliddesden Village.
15. The southern boundary, adjacent to Woods Lane, is defined by a mature hedgerow and trees, including two 'important trees' identified in the Cliddesden NP. To the east is land used for equestrian purposes, to the north is residential development (Hillfield), and to the west and beyond lies open countryside. Residential development also exists on the opposite side of Woods Lane, including their vehicular accesses. The land is relatively flat and enclosed by mature trees and hedgerows. The surrounding residential development is characterised by a mix of dwelling types, predominantly linear in form, with some development extending in depth.
16. As you approach the site from the west, it is clear that you have entered the village of Cliddesden. The speed limit changes from 60mph to 30mph. There is regular residential built form, with tarmacked driveways and kerb edges, manicured hedges and picket fences and wide well maintained kept grass verges. These are clear indications that you have left the rural surrounds. In contrast to this, when you reach the top of Woods Lane, at the village entrance sign, this is where you have more open views out across open fields, towards the M3 and Basingstoke.
17. Taking into account the above and my observations on site, whilst the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area, including forming part of the rural setting of Cliddesden, I consider that due to its enclosed nature and the built form in the immediate context, the appeal site contrasts, to some extent, with the verdant open countryside which extends to the west, contrary to the claim of the Council that the site reads as part of the 'undeveloped countryside' and the 'functional and visually coherent character of the countryside'.

18. Developing the site for up to four homes would mean losing an undeveloped piece of land and its contribution to the village's rural setting. However, although the site is outside the defined settlement boundary and within designated countryside, its physical and visual connection to existing buildings means it would not feel like an intrusion into open countryside. Instead, the development would appear as a logical and cohesive extension of the village, in keeping with its established pattern and character and responding appropriately to the local landscape and site context. Therefore, it would not harm the countryside's intrinsic character and beauty.
19. Detailed design proposals are not being considered at this stage. Nonetheless, the development would likely result in a depth beyond one plot because of the dwelling to the north, known as Hillfield. However, given the layout of nearby homes to the east, this would not be out of character with the local context. The site could probably be developed in a linear form along Woods Lane, consistent with the surrounding settlement pattern. Additionally, Hillfield would remain visually separate due to the established vegetation along the site's northern boundary.
20. The Council has expressed concerns about density, which would be about 8 dwellings per hectare (dph) if four homes were built. However, the appellant has demonstrated that this density aligns with the character of Woods Lane. For example, the Cliddesden Design Code identifies densities of around 15 dph for Cleresden Rise along Woods Lane, while Woods Lane itself averages about 8 dph. The proposed density would also be similar to or lower than recent nearby developments, as highlighted by the appellant. Therefore, the proposal would respect the established development pattern and would not harm the area's character.
21. Although the site currently has no direct vehicular access, creating an access point for the development would not appear out of place in the immediate context. While this access would open up views into the site and be visible from Woods Lane and nearby properties, the presence of residential development and associated features such as hardstanding would similarly not look out of character with the surrounding residential built form. There is also no evidence to suggest that some of the mature hedgerow and trees along Woods Lane could not be retained at the Technical Details consent stage. Retaining this vegetation would help reduce the proposal's impact on the character of Woods Lane.
22. In reaching this conclusion, I have considered the appellant's Landscape and Visual Appraisal. The appraisal indicates that the development's visual impact on the open countryside would be, at worst, moderate when viewed from viewpoint 3 near the site's southern boundary along Woods Lane. Other viewpoints show significantly less visibility, largely due to mature vegetation providing effective screening. Furthermore, the appraisal concludes that, with appropriate mitigation, the development would result in a moderate to minor visual impact and a minor to negligible landscape impact, effectively amounting to no material change.
23. The Council acknowledges that the proposal would not compromise the integrity of the Local Gap but contends that the land still plays an important role in the village's rural setting. However, based on my findings above, the development would not harm the character or appearance of the area. The visual separation between settlements would remain intact, and the Local Gap's purpose, preventing coalescence between Cliddesden and Basingstoke and preserving Cliddesden's

distinct identity, would not be undermined. Accordingly, the proposal would comply with the objectives of the Local Gap policy.

24. Therefore, in view of the above, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area. It would be in accordance with Policies EM1 and EM10 of the Local Plan, Policies DD1 and DD2 of the Cliddesden NP, Section 4 of the Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2018) (the SPD) and the Cliddesden Village Design Statement (adopted 2004).
25. Collectively, these policies, design statements, and the SPD require development to be sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area, respecting the local environment and positively contributing to local distinctiveness. Proposals should respond appropriately to the local landscape and site context, ensuring they respect, enhance, and do not harm the character or visual amenity of the affected landscape. Particular regard must be given to visual amenity, scenic quality, and the setting of the settlement, including important views to, across, within, and out of the settlement. Development proposals should also have due regard to the Cliddesden Design Guide, demonstrating how they contribute positively to the character of Cliddesden by incorporating design principles that reflect the local vernacular. No building or development should harm the skyline or appear visually intrusive within the valley settlement.
26. The proposal would also be in accordance with the principles set out in Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (The Framework), which promotes well-designed development that is sympathetic to local character.

Cliddesden Conservation Area

27. The appeal site is located approximately 85 metres west of the designated heritage asset of Cliddesden Conservation Area (CA). The CA was designated in 1981 to safeguard the buildings and features that define the village's character and its special architectural and historic interest. For the purposes of this appeal, the significance of the CA lies in the village's historic layout and form, the presence of individual and groups of historic buildings that collectively contribute to its character, and associated structures and features such as boundary walls, railings, paving, historic street furniture, hedgerows, trees, and other landscape elements. The CA also encompasses strategic views both into and out of the settlement. Its setting is shaped by its relationship with the surrounding rural landscape, mature trees, hedgerows, and views across rolling farmland.
28. Paragraph 213 of the Framework states that significance of heritage assets can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have a clear and convincing justification. The appeal site, due to its proximity and relationship to the CA, forms part of the rural landscape in which the CA is experienced. It reinforces several of the characteristics outlined above that contribute to the setting, including hedgerows, grass verges, and views across pastures and the wider countryside. As such, the site makes a positive contribution to the setting, and therefore the significance, of the CA.
29. However, as noted in the appellant's Heritage Statement³, the area between the appeal site and the CA boundary along Woods Lane is occupied by individual

³ 754: Woods Lane, Cliddesden - Development Site - Heritage Statement - Revision 0 - 8th May 2025

residential properties of varying ages. The most recent development, completed between 2018 and 2020, comprises five large two-storey detached houses within a gated site on the western edge of the CA. Two of these properties front Woods Lane, while the remaining three are positioned to the rear as backland development. This aligns with my observations during my site visit. Consequently, the setting of the CA, particularly on its western side, is already significantly influenced by existing residential development, including relatively recent additions.

30. As outlined above, I have found that the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the area. While the development would introduce residential built form onto a site currently free of permanent structures, the scheme would respect the established pattern of development along Woods Lane within the immediate context of the appeal site. Although the addition of up to four dwellings, along with associated domestic paraphernalia, vehicle movements, and parking, would inevitably result in some urbanisation, this would not cause material harm to the setting of the CA. The western approach to the village and the CA would remain largely unchanged, with the rural landscape and setting simply beginning slightly further along Woods Lane, continuing to make the same contribution as before.
31. Furthermore, the retention of mature hedgerows along parts of the site frontage, which could be secured at the technical details stage, would assist in preserving the rural character and sense of transition when approaching the CA. The proposal would not adversely affect the way in which the heritage asset is experienced or appreciated. Accordingly, the setting, and therefore the significance, of the CA would be preserved.
32. The appeal site is also visually separated from the CA by intervening residential development. The appellant has highlighted several other permissions in the immediate locality that were closer to the CA, including a recent approval for four dwellings where no harm to character or the CA was identified, subject to appropriate design and retention of vegetation. While each case must be assessed on its own merits, these examples demonstrate that additional residential development can be successfully accommodated within the CA's setting without resulting in substantial harm.
33. For completeness, I note that the closest listed building to the appeal site is 10 Woods Lane, a Grade II listed property. This building is not visible from the appeal site, and the Council has raised no concerns regarding its setting or significance. I have no substantive evidence to reach a different conclusion. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the setting, and therefore the significance, of No 10 would be preserved.
34. Therefore, in view of the above, I am satisfied that the significance of the designated heritage asset of Cliddesden CA, through development within its setting, would be preserved. It would be in accordance with Policy EM11 of the Local Plan, Policy H1 of the Cliddesden NP, and guidance within the Heritage Supplementary Planning Document.
35. Taken together, these policies and guidance require that all development conserves or enhances the borough's heritage assets in a manner proportionate to their significance. Proposals should demonstrate a clear understanding of the asset and its setting, how this has informed the design, and the anticipated impact on significance. Development within or adjacent to the Cliddesden CA will be

supported where it conserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Area, its buildings, and its setting. For proposals within the setting of heritage assets, the expectation is that there should be no unjustified adverse impact on significance or on the ability to appreciate that significance.

36. It would also be in accordance with the principles set out in Section 16 of the Framework, which requires great weight to be given to heritage assets' conservation.

Other Matters

37. Interested parties have expressed concerns that approving the proposal could lead to further housing on adjacent land and that Woods Lane has already accommodated a significant number of new dwellings. However, my decision is based solely on the specific merits and circumstances of this appeal. It does not establish a precedent for future development in the area.
38. The Parish Council has raised concerns regarding the potential adverse impact of the development on dark skies. While there is no Local Plan policy that prohibits development on this basis, Policy ENV5 of the Cliddesden NP seeks to minimise light pollution. This matter can be appropriately addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage.
39. Interested parties and the Parish Council have also raised concerns regarding the removal of a wildlife corridor, potential impacts on species and habitats, and the separation from existing residential dwellings. However, I am satisfied that these issues can be appropriately addressed at the technical details consent stage.

Planning Balance

40. I have found no harm to the character and appearance of the area, and I am also satisfied that the significance of the designated heritage asset of Cliddesden CA, through development within its setting, would be preserved. However, I have found conflict with Policies SS1 and SS6 of the Local Plan by virtue of the site being outside of any defined settlement boundary, it not being allocated for housing and it failing to fall under any of the exceptions set out by Policy SS6. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
41. The 2024 Framework introduced a revised methodology for calculating local housing need, resulting in an increase from 828 dwellings per annum (dpa) to 1,127 dpa as of December 2024. The Council's most recent position statement confirms that it can only demonstrate a 2.94-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged.
42. Paragraph 11 states that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the most important policies for determining the application are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole. This includes consideration of key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places, and providing affordable homes. Footnote 8 confirms that this applies where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, while Footnote 9 identifies the key policies that should be given particular regard.

43. Whilst the conflict with the development plan amounts to harm, the development strategy is clearly failing to deliver a five-year supply of housing. Accordingly, the weight to be afforded to the conflict with the development strategy, in light of the land supply shortfall, is reduced and I attach moderate weight to the conflict in these circumstances. I again recognise that the location of the appeal site is not considered to be isolated and would represent a sustainable form of development with access to services and facilities either in the immediate vicinity or by limited car journeys and nearby public transport.
44. Such a level of housing land supply shortfall would mean that the provision of up to 4 dwellings would attract significant weight in the balance, consistent with the Government's aim in paragraph 61 of the Framework of significantly boosting the supply of homes.
45. The proposal would also provide some socio-economic benefits, including supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities. There would also be economic benefits contributing to building a stronger, responsive, and competitive economy, supporting growth with construction and post-construction benefits. The proposal would encourage development and associated economic growth, with future occupants contributing to the local economy and continued viability of services in the local area. Together these benefits carry moderate weight in favour of the development.
46. Accordingly, in the context of paragraph 11 of the Framework, the adverse impacts of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits when assessed against the Framework's policies taken as a whole. This includes consideration of key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land and securing well-designed places. Therefore, although the proposal would conflict with the development plan when considered in its entirety, material considerations, including the Framework, outweigh that conflict and indicate that planning permission should be granted for development that is not fully in accordance with the plan.

Conclusion

47. The PPG makes it clear that it is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle, whose terms may only include the site location, the type and amount of development.
48. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal is allowed.

Laura Cuthbert

INSPECTOR