



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2025

by S Ramsden BSc (Hons) MA IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/W/25/3368316

Penny Lane Barn, Penny Lane, Stockbridge SO20 6JJ

- 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 Dawson Gray against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/02863/FULLN.
 - The development proposed is for the change of use of land to residential, construction of retaining wall, steps, creation of access and associated hard and soft landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have omitted “retrospective” from the description of development from that given on the application form as it is not a form of development. On my site visit I observed that the development has been carried out in part: but there are additional elements, notably works immediately to the south of the dwelling. Therefore, I have made my determination against the plans submitted.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside, and whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for the development having regard to local plan policies.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a former barn which has been converted to residential use. It retains vestiges of agricultural character, notably its simple barrel roof form and functional metal cladding. It is separate to, and screened from, the original farm complex and appears as a detached building in the countryside with a separate access track from the end of Penny Lane.
5. A Public Right of Way (PRoW) crosses the appeal site towards its southern end, running approximately east-west. Leading up to the appeal site, the unsurfaced PRoW has an informal character and is enclosed between high hedges, with undergrowth to either side of the pathway.

6. The surrounding area is verdant and unmistakably rural in character and appearance, with a wider landscape of cultivated fields surrounded by hedgerows and occasional trees.
7. The proposal is for a large, gravelled parking area to the west side of the dwelling, leading off the gravelled access track to the appeal site. The parking area extends outside the approved curtilage of the dwelling into land defined as countryside. The grey gravelled surface continues to the south of the dwelling to a further open gravelled area to the east of the building. The PRow would cross the wide entrance to the parking area to the west of the building; then continue immediately to the south of the building enclosed, in part, by two stone gabions; and would then cross the gravelled area to the east of the building, before exiting the site between the hedges beyond.
8. The large grey gravelled parking area sweeping up from the access track is out of character with its agricultural surroundings and wider informal rural landscape setting. The size and shape of the area allied with the surface material, and its lack of integration with surrounding natural landscape, increases its visually intrusive nature. The stone gabions along with the expanse of gravel, and absence of any soft landscaping, add to the austere and urbanising appearance of the proposals. The monotone colour palette of the grey gravel, barn and stone gabions reinforces the incongruity and poor design of the proposal.
9. The proposal is highly visible from public vantage points, given that the PRow runs across the site. The contrasting open character and formal appearance of the proposal with that of the informal, and the enclosed, nature of the PRow, combined with the lack of any delineation of the PRow across much of the site, mean that it is not successfully integrated into the proposal and connectivity across the site is diminished.
10. It is put to me that planning conditions could be used to require the submission and approval of a different hard and soft landscaping scheme, which could include the resurfacing of the gravelled area with a different coloured material. I have considered whether otherwise unacceptable elements of the proposal could be made acceptable through the use of conditions. Such conditions must meet the tests set out in paragraph 57 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
11. Whilst general references to improvements, which might be secured by condition, are alluded to I do not have sufficient evidence before me to be confident that suitable adjustments could be made within the remit of the development proposed to avoid the harm I have identified. It is not simply a question of unsuitable materials; it is their extensive use and the overall design of the proposals. Whilst additional planting may help to soften and screen the harm, I am not persuaded that this would negate it altogether. Furthermore, given the nature of the proposal, such changes would likely result in fundamentally different approach to the development before me, upon which interested parties would not have had the opportunity to comment.
12. The appellant points out that the appeal site does not lie within a designated landscape. Nevertheless, it does not follow that it possesses no qualities worthy of protection, and I have outlined these above. Neither is it shown that national or local planning policies to conserve and enhance landscape character are confined to designated areas.

13. For the reasons given above, the development would harm the character and appearance of the countryside. It would conflict with Policies COM11, E1 and E2 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan 2011-2029, 2016 (the Local Plan), which taken together seek to ensure that development is well designed and does not have a detrimental impact on, and is positively integrated into, the landscape character of an area.

Location

14. The appeal site is outside any settlement boundary defined in the Local Plan, and therefore in the countryside, for its purposes.
15. Policy COM2 of the Local Plan restricts the nature of development that is permitted in such areas to specified exceptions. The proposal includes development within the established residential curtilage of the converted barn but in addition seeks to further expand the grounds.
16. The surrounding land is agricultural in nature. Policy COM2a) specifies that development within the countryside will only be permitted if it is appropriate when assessed against a number of other Local Plan policies, including Policy COM11. Due to its visually intrusive nature the development would conflict with Policy COM11 and, therefore, conflicts with Policy COM2a).
17. Policy COM2b) states that development will only be permitted if it is essential for it to be located in the countryside. There is no evidence before me to suggest that such a large car parking area is required and that it is essential that it extends outside the approved curtilage of the dwelling, encroaching into the parcel of land within the countryside. There is an extant, partially implemented planning permission for the site (23/03063/FULLN) which includes a smaller space for car parking, in a more discreet location within the domestic curtilage of the dwelling, which weighs against car parking outside the curtilage being essential.
18. The appellant asserts that extending the domestic curtilage would enable a holistic approach to the landscaping of the site and that native planting could be secured by condition; to ensure that the incorporation of the parcel of land into residential use does not erode the rural landscape character of the setting of the house. The appellant also asserts that the parcel of land within the countryside is both small and redundant.
19. None of these assertions demonstrate that the development is essential within the countryside. Furthermore, the landscape scheme is visually intrusive, and extending it beyond the established residential curtilage only increases the harm. Native planting in that area would not mitigate the harm elsewhere that I have identified. The modest size of the parcel of land may limit the extent of harm but it does not surmount it.
20. For these reasons, the appeal site is not an appropriate location, for those parts of the development outside the residential curtilage, and conflicts with Policy COM2 of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

21. The development would not have an adverse impact on trees, neighbouring amenity, ecology, or highway safety. However, these are not factors which weigh in favour of allowing the appeal and do not diminish the harm that I have found on the main issues.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Ramsden

INSPECTOR