



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2025

by **L Gardner MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/25/3373848

The Plantation, Springbottom Lane, Bletchingley, Surrey RH1 4QZ

- 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 Warren Lucas against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref is TA/2025/283.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing stables and the erection of 1no.1bedroom dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development in the application form refers to the proposal as being for a two-bedroom dwelling. This differs from the description on the appeal form and the decision notice, both of which refer to a one-bedroom dwelling. The Council has confirmed that they assessed the proposal based on the plans showing one bedroom. The appellant has also confirmed that the proposal is for a one-bedroom dwelling. I have proceeded on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site would be a suitable location for housing, having regard to access to services and facilities.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a plot of land at Springbottom Lane, currently occupied by two stable blocks. The site is within a small cluster of development in the Green Belt with sparse built form interspersed with dense tree cover. The immediately surrounding area is distinctly rural, characterised by roadside hedges and narrow grass verges. The appeal site itself is bounded by a high brick wall.
5. Policy DP1 of the Tandridge Local Plan (TLP) Part 2 (2014) relates to sustainable development stating that the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
6. Policy CSP1 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy (TDCS) (2008) states that in order to promote sustainable patterns of travel and to make the best use of previously developed land, development will take place within the existing built up areas of the District and be located where there is a choice of modes of transport available.

7. The appeal site is outside of a built up settlement with associated services and facilities, the nearest being Merstham to the southwest. The road at the point of the appeal site is not served by footways or street lights in either direction. It is presented that the nearest footway commences some 400metres walk away from the appeal site and that the nearest bus stop is approximately 2km walk away.
8. At the point of the appeal site access, the road is subject to a national speed limit. Taking these factors together, rather than some functional walking being a viable option, I find that it is highly unlikely that occupiers of the proposed dwelling would deem walking to and from the appeal site, either to the nearest services or to the nearest bus stop, as a safe, reasonable or attractive means of sustainable travel.
9. Warwick Wold Road, which forms the western boundary of the appeal site is a designated cycle route which could provide cycle access to the nearest facilities in Merstham, and the nearest railway station, within a reasonable 2-3km distance. However, owing to the narrow, rural and unlit nature of the roadways along this route, I find that cycling as a means of sustainable transport would be limited to more experienced, confident cyclists, likely in the lighter summer months.
10. The appeal site is currently in use for stables which already attract vehicle movements to and from the site. The Transport Statement submitted to support the appeal presents that the general horse care visits would amount to a minimum of 2 visits a day, and that there would additionally be ad hoc movements associated with activities such as hay deliveries and vet visits.
11. It is stated that the movements associated with a one-bedroom dwelling would be comparable, typically by car or light vans, and that trips from larger vehicles would be expected to reduce significantly. However, the assessment does not break down the associated movements as to what they have been attributed to.
12. When noting the distance to services, deliveries are likely to be a frequent occurrence. Combined with movements associated with the occupiers of the dwelling and potential visitors, I find that the likely traffic generation, even for a one-bedroom dwelling has been underestimated. I therefore cannot be satisfied that the vehicular movements associated with the proposed dwelling would be comparable to the existing use of the site.
13. Paragraph 110 of the Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, this does not negate the premise that development should be focused on locations which offer a genuine choice of transport modes.
14. Even in the acknowledgement that an electric charging point could facilitate the use of electric vehicles, the occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be heavily reliant on the use of a private vehicle to access services and facilities to serve their day to day needs. On this basis, the proposal would be in an unsustainable location contrary to Policy DP1 of the TLP Part 2 and Policy CSP1 of the TDCS.

Other Matters

15. The site is located in the Green Belt. There is no dispute between the main parties that the proposal would involve the redevelopment of previously developed land and would not result in substantial harm to openness. Therefore, it would not be

inappropriate development in the Green Belt through paragraph 154 g) of the Framework. I see no reason to take a different judgement on this matter.

16. The appeal site is also located within the Surrey Hills National Landscape (NL) and Area of Great Landscape Value. The statutory purpose of NLs is conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty. Section 245 (Protected landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 amends the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions, which affect NLs. Relevant authorities must seek to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, which includes NLs.
17. Contrary to the conclusions on a previous application at the site, the Council are satisfied that the proposed new dwelling would not detract from the established character and appearance of the area or the scenic beauty of the landscape designations. Based on the evidence before me, I also find that the proposal would conserve the defining characteristics of the Surrey Hills NL and preserve the areas landscape value.
18. The Council has not resisted the proposal based on unacceptable highway safety impacts. I see no reason to take a different judgement on this matter. Nevertheless, this does not specifically weigh in favour of the proposal.

Planning Balance

19. The proposed development would introduce an additional dwelling in a location which cannot reasonably prioritise sustainable transport modes and pedestrian and cycle movements. Future occupiers of the proposed dwelling would therefore be heavily reliant on the use of a private vehicle.
20. On this basis, the proposal does not represent a suitable location for housing, having regard to access to services and facilities. As such, it would not accord with the development plan when read as a whole. It would also be contrary to the Framework, which seeks to direct new housing to suitable locations, and to promote sustainable travel modes, such as walking and cycling to limit future car use. I find the harm arising from this conflict to be significant, to which I have attributed significant weight.
21. The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites; the most recent calculation is that the Council can only demonstrate a supply of 1.92 years. This is a notable shortfall which warrants the application of paragraph 11(d) of the Framework. This paragraph relates to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, stating that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
22. The appeal proposal would make a marginal contribution to the Council's housing land supply, and bring forward housing at a small scale, on previously developed land, recognised as being beneficial by the Framework. There are other associated social, environmental and economic benefits including support to an existing rural community and employment generated through construction. The benefits would be associated with a single dwelling, but I have nevertheless given them moderate weight.

23. There is reference within the evidence before me to the proposal forming a self-build dwelling, to which the Council is of the view could be secured by condition. However, I remain to be satisfied that a condition would meet the tests within the Framework given the practicalities around enforcing such a condition. In the absence of a legal agreement to secure the dwelling as self-build, I have given the intention limited weight in my overall decision.
24. When taking all of the above together, the adverse effects of the proposal in relation to its unsustainable location, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal, when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
25. The appellant has drawn my attention to previous appeal decisions in Welwyn Hatfield¹ and Basingstoke and Deane² which have been allowed based on the application of paragraph 11(d) of the Framework. In the latter case, the main issue of the appeal was not relating to the sustainability of the appeal site and therefore I cannot be satisfied that this proposal is directly comparable to the appeal scheme before me.
26. The Welwyn Hatfield decision has closer similarities, being partially related to an assessment of sustainability. However, having reviewed that decision it is clear that the Inspector considered other material considerations including a fall back position. I therefore cannot be satisfied that this decision is so closely aligned to the appeal scheme that it would justify me to alter my conclusions. Moreover, the Council has also provided numerous appeal decisions³ which take a contrary view to those provided by the appellant. These serve to demonstrate that each appeal must be considered on its own merits.

Conclusion

27. I conclude that the proposal conflicts with the development plan and material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

L Gardner

INSPECTOR

¹ APP/C1950/W/22/3307181 decision dated 14 February 2023

² APP/H1705/W/25/3365525 decision dated 6 August 2025

³ Appendices 4 to 8 inclusive of the Council's statement