



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2025

by **S Ramsden BSc (Hons) MA MA IHBC**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/W/25/3372566

Land at 382126 150821, Rudge Lane, Standerwick Frome, Somerset BA11 2PT

- 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 & Mrs L & S Parker against the decision of Somerset Council.
 - The application reference is 2025/0715/FUL.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of 1no. dwelling using existing entrance; new planting and biodiversity enhancement measures; proposed live/work unit and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the appeal site is an acceptable location for the development having regard to development plan policies;
 - Whether the appeal site is in an accessible location; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and wider countryside.

Reasons

Location

3. Taken together, Policies CP1 and CP2 of the Mendip District Local Plan 2006-2029 Part 1: Strategy and Policies (the Local Plan), 2014, set out the development strategy for the plan area, which follows a hierarchical pattern. It directs development towards the five named principal settlements in the area, with new development tailored to meet local needs being directed towards primary and secondary villages. Development outside those areas and in open countryside is strictly controlled by the Local Plan, including by Policy CP4.
4. The appeal site is in open countryside; outside the small, scattered settlement of Standerwick. Policy CP4 permits rural affordable housing or occupational dwellings for certain types of rural workers. The appeal proposal is for neither and is therefore contrary to Policy CP4 of the Local Plan.
5. The proposal would introduce new housing into the countryside and would adversely impact on the plan led approach to the distribution of development that the Local Plan seeks to deliver. In this respect the development would be contrary to Policies CP1, CP2 and CP4 of the Local Plan.

Accessibility

6. The appeal site is a short walk from the Bell Public House in Standerwick, along an unlit country road with no footway. Other businesses in Standerwick include an indoor bowls facility and dog grooming business, but these do not amount to facilities required for day-to-day living. Mole Valley Farmers shop sells a limited range of food and non-food items, but is approximately 800m from the appeal site, mostly along unlit country roads with no footway, and on the other side of the busy and well-trafficked A36. The national speed limit applies on this section of the A36 and there is no dedicated pedestrian crossing.
7. Lower Rudge, to the northeast of the appeal site, has a public house but no shopping facilities. It is over 1km distance from the appeal site, along an unlit country lane with no footway. The White Row Farm Shop is approximately 2km to the northwest of the appeal site, along the busy, unlit, and well-trafficked A36. Neither route would be an attractive proposition for pedestrians, nor would they provide facilities required on a day-to-day basis, such as schools or medical facilities.
8. Limited facilities are available at Beckington and Little Dilton, but at more than 2km and 3km distance respectively and being accessed, in part, along Rudge Lane and/or the A36 they would not be convenient to access on foot from the appeal site. The larger settlement of Frome is approximately 5km from the appeal site, but no evidence has been presented to suggest that the appeal site is well served by public transport giving access to those areas. There are a school and a doctors in Beckington, and there is a further school in Berkley. All are at some distance from the appeal site and would not be convenient to access except by car.
9. The appellant has referred to a myriad of public footpaths and bridleways surrounding Standerwick. At my site visit I observed that those in the immediate vicinity were unmade and unlit footpaths and tracks across fields. They would not be accessible to all users and would be unattractive in the dark or poor weather.
10. The development incorporates a live/work element. Whilst working from the site might reduce the need for some car journeys it would not require any and all future occupants to work from the site. Nor would it alleviate the need for occupants to access facilities away from the site for day-to-day necessities, or fully address the overall car-dependent nature of the development.
11. There is a very limited number of facilities and services available which could be reasonably accessed on foot from the appeal site. It is not well placed to access the range of services and facilities required on a day-to-day basis other than by car. As such, I find the development would not be in an accessible location. The development would therefore conflict with Policies CP1 and CP2 of the Local Plan which seek to focus new development in locations with good access to services and facilities including a choice of public transport.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal site forms one part of an open agricultural field to the north of Standerwick. It is currently enclosed by hedges on three sides and is accessed via a gate from a bend on Rudge Lane, as the road leaves the settlement. On my site visit I did not observe the site to be barren, and it is clearly agricultural and rural in both character and appearance.

13. The Bell Public House and the bowls club are clustered near the junction of Rudge Lane and the A36. Standerwick otherwise is composed of residential properties, which become more dispersed further from the junction with the A36. The houses are interspersed with fields and open land, before giving way to a more rural and unmistakably agricultural landscape, of cultivated fields surrounded by hedgerows and occasional trees.
14. The erection of two buildings on the site would result in the loss of countryside. Whilst the single storey nature of the development would limit its visual impact to some degree it would not mitigate the harmful impact entirely. The extensive glazing would lead to it being more conspicuous during the hours of darkness. The proposed entrance gates and driveway, along with the domestic paraphernalia that occupation would generate, would have an urbanising and harmful impact on the character and appearance of the local area and countryside. The proposed wildflower meadow area around the buildings would not sufficiently negate this impact, and it cannot be assumed it would be maintained as such by future occupants.
15. The hedges surrounding the site would offer some screening for the development; however, the new vehicular entrance to the site would be prominent in views along Rudge Lane from both the east and south. The planting of an additional hedge to the boundary to the east of the appeal site would offer an additional degree of screening from that direction; however, although hedges might screen or soften the proposal such features are not permanent and may change over time. The visual harm caused by the development would be greater in the immediate area, but would nevertheless impact on the character of the wider countryside.
16. Policy DP4 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the area's rich and varied landscapes. It states that any decision-making will take into account efforts made by applicants to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate negative impacts and the need for the proposal to take place in that location. The supporting text highlights the need to consider the cumulative impacts of schemes in the same area which, collectively, may result in a more significant impact that will change the character of the landscape.
17. It has not been demonstrated that there is a need for this development to take place in this location in the countryside. Additionally, there is a recent permission¹ for a detached dwelling in a field to the east of the appeal site on the opposite side of Rudge Lane. Taken together they would continue encroachment of development into the open countryside and adversely impact on the character of the surrounding area.
18. I find therefore, the development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area and wider countryside. As such, the development conflicts with Policy DP4 of the Local Plan. It also conflicts with Policies DP1 and DP7 which taken together seek to ensure that development is appropriate to local context and enhances local identity and distinctiveness.

Other Matters

19. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of appeal decisions, although I have not been provided with full details of each case. Due to the similarities, I have

¹ Planning Inspectorate Ref.: APP/E3335/W/23/3330446

given considerable weight to the appeal decision for the land adjacent to Palmers Farm, Rudge Lane, Standerwick². As in that decision, I have found conflict with Policies CP1, CP4 and DP4 of the Local Plan. I have similarly found harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. Due to that harm and the absence of any evidence regarding the necessity of the development to occur in this location in the countryside, allied to the cumulative impact with that of the recently approved development on Rudge Lane, I have found conflict with Policies DP1, DP4 and DP7 of the Local Plan, leading me to a different conclusion overall.

20. The appeal³ at land adjacent to 2a Clivey, Dilton Marsh, differs in that although outside the settlement boundary, the appeal site was contiguous with existing urban form. In that case, the Inspector found no harm to the character and appearance of the area. Dilton Marsh contains a range of facilities, and the occupants of the proposed house would not be reliant on private transport, so no conflict was found with the Framework in that regard. I therefore attribute little weight to this comparison, and it does not lead me to an alternative conclusion.
21. The appellant has also drawn my attention to a planning decision at land adjoining Acrewood Little Green, Mells.⁴ The Council considered that site to be in a sustainable location having access to a number of services and facilities in a Primary Village. It also considered the proposals to be acceptably located between two existing dwellings within the street scene making it an “ideal infill plot.” I therefore attribute little weight to this comparison, and it does not lead me to an alternative conclusion.

Planning Balance

22. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply at odds with Paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Consequently paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged; whereby 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, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
23. The Council states that their five year housing land supply figure is 3.67 years, as of October 2024. However, based on revisions to the Framework (December 2024), using the amended method of calculating housing requirement, overall Somerset Council can only demonstrate a 3.55 year supply, and within the former Mendip area a 2.3 year supply.
24. This is a significant shortfall and indicates that there is a pressing need for housing, however no evidence has been supplied to indicate that there is a pressing need for the type of housing proposed by the development. The construction of one dwelling would make a very small contribution towards the Council’s housing supply, although there is nothing to suggest that the proposal could not be delivered quickly. There would be modest short term economic benefits arising from the construction of the dwelling and modest benefits arising from its occupation and associated spending in the locality.

² Planning Inspectorate Ref.: APP/E3335/W/23/3330446

³ Planning Inspectorate Ref.: APP/Y3940/W/20/3254729

⁴ Mendip District Council Ref.: 2021/2442/FUL

25. The new wildlife pond may contribute towards biodiversity enhancements, as would an increase in native planting on the site. The proposed dwelling is described as an eco-home, and would be built to a high level of energy efficiency. It would have the ability to comply with lifetime standards and be fully wheelchair compliant if needed.
26. The site surfaces would be permeable, and a sewage treatment plant is proposed. The appeal site is also reported to be outside any surface water catchment area. Overall, I attach modest weight to these benefits.
27. Overall, I find that the significant harm the development would have by way of undermining the plan led approach to the distribution of development that the Local Plan seeks to deliver; being in an inadequately accessible location; and unacceptably harming the character and appearance of the area and wider countryside, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the modest benefits of the development when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole

Conclusion

28. 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