



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2025

by **H Jones BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 January 2026

Appeal Ref: **APP/K0940/W/25/3374163**

Barn opposite High Farm, Spring Bank Road, Grange-over-Sands LA11 6HA

- 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 Mrs Tracey Honeyford against the decision of Westmorland and Furness Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0568/FPA.
 - The development proposed is change of use and conversion of barn to three self-build dwellings with associated works including waste water treatment system.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The address in the banner heading above is taken from the Council's decision notice which accurately describes the site's location.
3. A new local plan for Westmorland and Furness is emerging (the Emerging Plan). I have limited information before me in relation to the precise stage at which the Emerging Plan is at, the level of unresolved objection that there may be to it or the degree of consistency of any policies within it to the content of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Furthermore, the evidence before me does not contain the full content of any of the Emerging Plan's policies or content which may be of any relevance to the proposal. In the circumstances, the Emerging Plan is a matter of limited weight in my decision.
4. Listed farmhouse buildings are located near to the site. As a result, in making my decision, I have had special regard to section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - Whether the development complies with relevant policies within the development plan, and within the Framework, which control housing in the countryside; and
 - The effects of the development on the character and appearance of the area, and on the significance of listed farm buildings opposite the site.

Reasons

Location

6. The appeal site contains a barn, and it forms part of a building group, not a village or hamlet, situated within the open countryside. The appeal site is isolated from Grange-over-Sands and the services, facilities and public transport options it provides. Access to Grange-over-Sands is also provided by a narrow, undulating, unlit and poorly-surfaced road. These factors mean that the site's accessibility credentials are poor, and future occupiers of the houses proposed would be likely to be heavily reliant on the use of cars for travelling.
7. Policy CS1.1 of the South Lakeland Local Development Framework Core Strategy (the CS) is entitled 'Sustainable Development Principles'. The Policy's principles include those which set out that it is vital to protect the countryside for its intrinsic beauty, that the need for travel should be minimised with most new developments directed to existing service centres, whilst it establishes a clear preference for development to be located within settlements and other land well-located in relation to services and infrastructure.
8. CS Policy CS1.2 presents a development strategy, and it establishes a settlement hierarchy. The Policy advocates that development should be concentrated within settlements higher up this hierarchy and that new development should only be permitted in the open countryside in exceptional circumstances.
9. One such exceptional circumstance is where the development involves the appropriate change of use of an existing building, and Policy DM16 of the South Lakeland District Council Local Plan Development Management Policies document (the DMPD) specifically relates to this type of development. Policy DM16 supports the conversion and re-use of buildings in the open countryside for housing and other purposes where certain criteria are all met, including that the building is of a traditional design, construction and material composition.
10. Existing plans¹ show that the barn has corrugated cement roof sheeting and metal roof trusses. The barn is also served by large, metal roller shutter doors. The submitted Preliminary Roost Assessment² describes, and includes photographs of, the barn's elevations being constructed of breeze blocks, overlaid with timber sheets. Therefore, the barn's design, construction and material composition is not traditional. Instead, it exhibits a more modern appearance. Since the proposal would not result in a traditional rural building being converted, conflict with Policy DM16 arises.
11. DMPD Policy DM14 concerns rural exception sites, and it sets out that housing in the open countryside will only be considered where it provides 100% affordable housing as well as adhering to certain other criteria, or it includes a small element of open market housing which must be clearly evidenced on viability grounds.
12. The appellant submits that one of the three houses proposed would be an affordable unit. However, a completed Section 106 agreement has not been submitted. As a result, there is no mechanism before me that would secure any of the proposed houses as affordable units or prevent them from being open-market

¹ Existing First Floor & Roof Plans 24001-02 and Existing Elevations 24001-03

² Preliminary Roost Assessment, by Arbtech Consulting Ltd, dated 5 June 2025, Issue 1

units. Consequently, conflict with Policy DM14 arises as the proposal would not deliver the type of rural exception development Policy DM14 supports.

13. It is also submitted that each of the houses would be self-build units. The Framework includes a definition of self-build and custom-build housing, and it refers to the legal definition within the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended). Expanding upon this, the Planning Practice Guidance is clear that, in considering whether a home is a self-build, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout³.
14. The appellant submits that the houses would be occupied by herself and her husband, their daughter, and a neighbour. However, the evidence before me that the initial owners of the houses have had primary input into their final design and layout is not compelling.
15. Moreover, even if I was satisfied with the submissions made that the initial owners have had primary input into the design, there is no mechanism before me to secure the houses as self-build homes. An appropriate means to do so would be a planning obligation comprising of a Section 106 legal agreement. Without this security, I am not satisfied that the development would deliver self-build homes.
16. The purpose of DMPD Policy DM12 is to encourage and provide a positive framework for self-build and custom-build housing. It sets out the locations considered appropriate for such development: within Principal, Key or Local Service Centres, within or on the edge of small villages and hamlets and on rural exception sites. Since self-build homes would not be secured, the site lies in the open countryside, and the proposal fails to constitute a rural exception development Policy DM14 supports, the proposal conflicts with Policy DM12.
17. Conflict also arises with Policy DM1 of the DMPD. Policy DM1 is a general development management policy with its purpose being to maintain, protect and promote the district's environmental, economic, social and historic qualities, safeguard local amenity and ensure its sustainability. The operation of the Policy is such that, as well as requiring development proposals to comply with its varied criteria, it requires development proposals to comply with other development plan policies relevant to them. For the reasons I have set out that is not the case here.
18. For the reasons given above, the proposal would result in a housing development within an isolated open countryside location and no exceptional circumstances or justification for it applies. It would result in a pattern of housing development and growth in a countryside location that would be contrary to the planned distribution of development advocated by the development plan. This would be harmful. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Policies CS1.1 and CS1.2 of the CS, and Policies DM16, DM14, DM12 and DM1 of the DMPD.
19. Furthermore, amongst other matters, the Framework⁴ sets out that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided, unless certain exceptional circumstances apply, and that patterns of growth should be managed and the environmental impacts of development-related traffic taken into account. As an isolated housing development without exceptional justification, the proposal conflicts with these Framework Policies.

³ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph 016 Reference ID: 57-016-20210208

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 84, 109 and 110

20. Therefore, the development does not comply with relevant policies within the development plan, and within the Framework, which control housing in the countryside.
21. Finally, the Council's first reason for refusal refers to DMPD Policy DM13. This Policy specifically concerns housing developments on sites within or on the edge of small villages and hamlets. The site is in the open countryside, therefore, Policy DM13 is not relevant to the proposal.

Character and appearance and the listed farm buildings

22. The existing barn adopts a functional character and appearance, reflective of agricultural use. The building group it forms a part of includes a traditional farmhouse at High Farm and other buildings exhibiting an agricultural character. This includes the Grade II listed farm buildings to the south-east of the High Farm farmhouse, opposite the appeal site.
23. The listed farm buildings display a traditional appearance and are constructed of distinctive Lakeland materials. This traditional appearance positively contributes to their significance. Furthermore, they provide evidence of the form, layout and function of historic Lakeland farm buildings. Consequently, the significance of the listed farm buildings principally stems from their architectural and historic interest.
24. The site and the nearby listed buildings are still set within an area with an overtly rural character. This stems from the fields in the surroundings and attractive countryside views, the other nearby buildings with agricultural links and character as well as features like the narrow country lane bounded by stone walls which provides access. This setting also positively contributes to the significance of the listed farm buildings.
25. As a result of the proposal, in particular its plethora of windows and doors, the barn's rural character and appearance would be transformed. Instead, the barn would take on a residential character and domesticated appearance. Houses must of course be served by windows and doors, nevertheless, the effects of this proposal would contrast with, and diminish, the rural character and appearance of the barn itself, and of the building group it forms a part of. This would harmfully erode the attractive rural qualities of the area.
26. Since these rural qualities play a role in appreciating the significance of the listed farm buildings, their diminishment would also result in less than substantial harm to the heritage asset. The level of harm would not be at the uppermost limit of less than substantial harm, but it would be moderate and, having regard to the relevant statutory duty I set out earlier, this is a matter of considerable importance and weight in my decision.
27. The development would add to local housing supply, increase housing choice and provide homes suitable for different home-seekers whilst they could be built-out relatively quickly too. This would come at a time when the most up-to-date evidence before me demonstrates that the Council has less than 5 years' worth of housing supply (a supply of 3.1 years). Therefore, the need for housing is pressing. That said, with only three houses proposed, the contribution to supply would be limited.
28. It is proposed that a wall and fence be lowered which would improve visibility for highway users. The bat and bird boxes and the planting proposed would result in

some biodiversity enhancements, carbon sequestration and oxygen production. However, these further benefits would only be modest.

29. Overall, the public benefits that would be derived from the development, including most valuably the contribution to housing supply, would be insufficient to outweigh the level of less than substantial harm it would cause to the listed farm buildings.
30. For the reasons given above, I find that the effects of the development on the character and appearance of the area would be unacceptably harmful, and it would result in harm to the significance of the listed farm buildings opposite the site. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with CS Policies CS1.1, CS1.2, CS8.2, CS8.6 and CS8.10. These Policies seek to protect the countryside for its intrinsic beauty, seek to ensure the character of development is appropriate and that it preserves local character and supports and enhances local distinctiveness, and seek to safeguard heritage assets.
31. The proposal also conflicts with Policies DM1, DM2 and DM3 of the DMPD which require developments to respond appropriately to their context, character and distinctiveness, and conserve, enhance and, where appropriate, better reveal the significance of listed buildings and their settings. Further conflict arises with paragraphs 135, 202, 210 and 213 of the Framework which set out that developments should be sympathetic to local character and history, that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, and which emphasize the desirability for new development to positively contribute to local character and distinctiveness and for any harm to designated heritage assets to be convincingly justified.

Other Matters

32. It is set out to me that there is little prospect of the barn being used constructively as an agricultural building in the future, but the evidence before me supporting this is limited and not compelling. Furthermore, even though a building would be reused, it would result in the harmful effects described in my main issues and, therefore, not result in a positive outcome.
33. The development may have been designed so that it would be energy efficient and use water efficiently. However, I have been provided with no substantive evidence which demonstrates that overall, reductions in energy use would arise, particularly given my findings in my first main issue relating to patterns of growth and the environmental impacts of development-related traffic.
34. I also acknowledge that future occupiers would be provided with adequate living conditions and the development would not increase flood risks. However, the absence of harm in these and other regards is of neutral consequence.
35. There is no substantive evidence before me which indicates that the Council's determination of the planning application via delegated powers was procedurally incorrect, and the manner in which the Council handled the planning application has little bearing on the planning merits of the case.
36. My attention has been drawn to previous permissions for the conversion of the listed farm buildings opposite the site and to some other housing developments in the area. However, I have very limited information before me in respect of these cases including the detailed reasons for the decisions made and even whether all the development permissions are extant. Appeal decisions rely heavily on case-

specific evidence and circumstances, it is not at all clear that the cited cases are very comparable to the appeal proposal, and I must reach my conclusions based on the evidence before me and the particular site-specific circumstances of the appeal. Therefore, the cited developments do not weigh in the favour of the proposal to any meaningful extent.

37. Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 is referred to, but the appeal relates to an application for full planning permission, and I must determine it on this basis having appropriate regard to the development plan policies which apply to it.

Planning Balance

38. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In my main issues, I have found that the development conflicts with a series of development plan policies and, despite the age of the development plan policies, and the Council's housing land supply position, the substance of these policies remains consistent with the Framework. The development conflicts with the development plan as a whole.
39. That said, since the Council cannot demonstrate a deliverable 5 year supply of housing land, paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged. However, in this case, the public benefits of the development would not outweigh the less than substantial harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed farm buildings. Therefore, the application of Framework policy that protects designated heritage assets provides a strong reason for refusing the development and, in turn, the proposal does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Conclusion

40. The development conflicts with the development plan, and there are no material considerations which indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Jones

INSPECTOR