



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by **O Marigold BSc DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C3105/W/25/3374604

Land north of Burycroft Road, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire OX15 5PR

- 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 Mr and Mrs Reynolds against the decision of Cherwell District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01615/PIP.
 - The proposal is for residential development of 3 to 5 dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for Permission in Principle. As such, the scope of the considerations at this stage is limited to location, land use and the amount of the proposed development. All other matters would be considered as part of any subsequent application for Technical Details Consent (TDC). In this case, permission is sought for between three and five dwellings, and I have determined the appeal on this basis. Although plans of a possible layout and access have been provided, I have treated these as being only illustrative.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the proposal and its location, land use and amount would (a) accord with the Development Plan strategy for housing, including in respect of the character and appearance of the area, and (b) have acceptable access to services and facilities.

Reasons

Strategy, Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site consists of part of a field on the edge of land which slopes steeply down to a stream. Further along Burycroft Road (the road), on the same side as the site, is a linear row of dwellings, separated from the site by parts of the field and a Public Right of Way (PRoW). Opposite the site is Long House, a large dwelling with a lengthy, tall frontage wall, but which otherwise has green space around it. Together, these factors give the site and its surroundings an attractive rural, rolling countryside appearance.
5. The proposal seeks to erect between three and five dwellings on the site, accessed from the road. Policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 (CLP), adopted July 2015, require development to positively contribute to

the character of the area, to respect and enhance landscape features, and to avoid undue intrusion into the open countryside.

6. The illustrative plans suggest that the proposal could take the form of a further row of houses, set back from the road to ensure that existing tall frontage trees and hedgerows are retained. Even so, being for between three and five dwellings, it would inherently result in additional, appreciable built form on the site.
7. The edge of the village here is formed by the end of the existing row of housing and by the PRoW. The proposal would therefore extend built form beyond the village limits and intrude into the undeveloped open countryside. Domestic paraphernalia associated with residential use, such as parked cars and hard surfaced areas, would add to its harmful, suburbanising effects.
8. Consequently, the proposal would undermine and erode the attractive, countryside appearance of the site and its surroundings. Furthermore, the connection between the proposal and the existing row would be weak, given their separation by parts of the field and the PRoW. As a result, even as three dwellings, the proposal would have little integration with the existing row of housing, thus appearing out of place.
9. The proposal would to some extent be screened from the road by the trees and hedgerows. That said, this cannot be relied upon, particularly in winter months or over the long term. In any case, the effects of the additional built form would be clearly seen from parts of the PRoW, from which the site is open and undivided. Any domestic driveway is also likely to be visible from the road through the entrance. For the reasons given above, the proposal would harm the character of the landscape, contrary to policies ESD13 and ESD15.
10. CLP policy Villages 1 (V1) categorises settlements, to guide new housing to the most suitable locations. It identifies Hook Norton as a Category A settlement, where minor development is permitted where it is within the built-up limits of the village. However, I have found that the site is outside of the limits of Hook Norton. Additionally, the supporting text to policy V1 requires compliance with policy ESD15. Accordingly, in light of my findings above, CLP policy V1 would not be met.
11. For the reasons given above, the proposal and its location, land use and amount would fail to comply with the Development Plan strategy for housing, including in respect of the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with CLP policies V1, ESD13 and ESD15. I give substantial negative weight to this harm and conflict. CLP policy PSD1 relates to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and I shall consider this below.

Services and Facilities

12. CLP policy ESD1 seeks to distribute growth to the most sustainable locations, as identified in the Local Plan. This is to reduce the need to travel, and to encourage sustainable travel options. In the context of the Development Plan, Category A villages such as Hook Norton are the most sustainable rural settlements in the District. Although outside of its limits, the site would nevertheless be relatively close to the village.
13. Hook Norton has a range of facilities including a public house, GP and dental surgeries, a primary school, a shop and Post Office, and the village hall, all within

a reasonable walking distance from the site. There are fairly regular bus services to Chipping Norton and Banbury, from stops around six minutes' walk away.

14. Access from the site to these facilities would require the use of local roads. Some of these have steep gradients, with limited pavement and street lighting. The PRow provides an alternative route to the village centre, but it is steeply graded, unpaved and unlit. It follows that some people would need to use private vehicles, for example those of limited mobility, at night, or in poor weather.
15. Even so, whilst tempered by the peripheral location of the site, walking or perhaps cycling into the village would provide access to at least some day-to-day services for many people. Even if car journeys are necessary, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that opportunities for sustainable transport use will vary between urban and rural areas. Consequently, in the context of its rural location, the site has fairly good access to services and facilities.
16. My attention has been drawn to an appeal decision at Sibford Gower¹, which was found to have poor access to services. However, that proposal relates to a different village, where the other Inspector found considerable limitations to the accessing of local facilities by sustainable modes. As such, I can make little useful comparison between that case and the development before me.
17. For the reasons set out above, the proposal and its location, land use and amount would have acceptable access to services and facilities. On this basis, it would accord with CLP policy ESD1. This matter is therefore neutral in the planning balance.

Other Considerations

18. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate an adequate supply of housing land, with a shortfall which is considerably below five years. Accordingly, Framework paragraph 11 requires that I determine whether the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits inherent in providing additional houses, to assist in addressing the undersupply. CLP policy PSD1 makes a similar requirement.
19. I have found conflict with CLP policies ESD13, ESD15 and V1. These policies are broadly consistent with the Framework in seeking to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and requiring development to be sympathetic to local character, including its landscape setting.
20. Against the harm that I have identified, the proposal would make a positive contribution to the supply of housing. Construction of the dwellings would assist with the building industry, and their future occupiers would make positive social and economic contributions.
21. However, due to the proposal being for between three and five dwellings, such benefits would be fairly limited and so carry moderate weight. I therefore take a different view from the Inspector at Bromley², who was considering a larger form of development in another part of the country. Consequently, the balance of

¹ PINS reference APP/C3105/W/24/3350881

² PINS reference APP/G5180/W/18/3206947

considerations is against the proposal, including when assessed against Policy PSD1.

22. In reaching my findings, I have taken into account the previous appeal decision at the site³. Examples of other development approved in the District have been provided to me, including a 55-dwelling scheme in Hook Norton⁴. Nonetheless, these examples relate to sites in other locations where the considerations, including in respect of character and appearance, differed from those here. As a result, these decisions do not change my overall conclusions.

Other Matters

23. The site is not far from the Hook Norton Conservation Area (CA) and a number of Grade II listed buildings on Netting Street in Hook Norton, including a Baptist Church and dwellings. The tower of the Parish Church, a Grade 1 listed building, is visible from the site. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that I have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings and their settings. Section 72 of the same Act requires that I pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
24. There is no dispute between the Council and the appellants that the proposal would have no adverse effect on the character or appearance of the CA or the setting of the listed buildings. I see little reason to take a different view. However, this does not alter my conclusions above.

Conclusion

25. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications for permission, and therefore appeals, must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Given the harm that I have identified, the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework read in the round.
26. For the reasons given, I have found conflict with the Development Plan as a whole. The material considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not indicate a decision other than in accordance with the Development Plan. This leads me to conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

O Marigold

INSPECTOR

³ PINS reference APP/C3105/W/23/3326858

⁴ LPA reference 24/03243/OUT