



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 December 2025

by **S F Murphy BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI MISEP CEnv.**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/W/25/3375223

Land rear of Ashwell House, Singleborough Lane, Singleborough, Great Horwood, Buckinghamshire MK17 0RF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Lucy Goodey against Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/25/2796/PIP
 - The development proposed is permission in principle for a minimum of one and maximum of one self-build dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises the permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development separating out the consideration of matters of principle from technical detail. The permission in principle consent has two stages: the first stage establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle with the second stage being when detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first stage.
3. The PPG states that the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development with issues relevant to these matters being considered. All other matters are considered as part of the subsequent technical details consent application should permission in principle be granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development with particular regard to the effect the development would have on the rural characteristics of the site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located at the eastern end of a field which is accessed by an existing access track from Singleborough Lane in the open countryside. The field itself is surrounded by hedgerow interspersed with trees and is set within agricultural land to the west of the hamlet of Singleborough separated by

hedgerow field boundaries. An agricultural barn is within the field adjacent to the appeal site.

6. Policies S2 and S3 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan adopted September 2021 (the Local Plan) provide the spatial strategy and locations for growth within the plan area. They seek to direct new housing towards existing urban centres and defined rural settlements with existing facilities and services. The policies require development to accord with the settlement hierarchy set out in Table 2 within the Local Plan, with new development in the countryside being avoided where it would compromise the character of the countryside. Singleborough, not being listed within Table 2, is not within the settlement hierarchy where development would be directed to.
7. Policy 1 of the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan made in March 2015 (the Neighbourhood Plan) states that development proposals on land outside the settlement boundary within the countryside is not to be permitted unless it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture or forestry, or for enterprise, diversification or recreation that benefits the rural economy. The policy goes on to outline that new development in the countryside should not result in the loss of open land that contributes to the form and character of Singleborough.
8. The appellant acknowledges that the appeal site is located within the countryside however has set out that there are material considerations which they consider outweigh this policy position. This includes that it should be seen within the context of the construction of the agricultural building, that because a building is visible in the countryside it need not harm the character of the countryside; and that appropriate design can ensure the character of the countryside is not compromised. The appellant has also commented such development would support services in neighbouring villages and thereby their vitality and would support the goals of sustainable development.
9. The appeal site is not only within open countryside but lies separately from the hamlet of Singleborough due to the presence of hedgerow field boundaries providing a further degree of detachment. Singleborough is set out in a linear form along Singleborough Lane and has no settlement boundary. Dwellings within Singleborough either face onto Singleborough Lane or have short driveways connecting to the highway. Given the appeal site's position, it would be functionally and physically at odds with the prevailing linear character of residential development, being divorced from the hamlet by the intervening fields.
10. Singleborough has no facilities or amenities with residents having to drive to either Great Horwood or further afield. Whilst Great Horwood village is not of great distance, Singleborough Lane has no continuous footway nor is the road lit and it is subject to the national speed limit. This would not be a particularly attractive route for pedestrians and less confident cyclists particularly in the winter months with shorter hours of daylight or in poor weather. Whilst I noted Public Rights of Way (PRoW) footpath signs on my site visit, again such paths would not be a sustainable form of transport throughout the whole year. It also seems unlikely that using the bus through Singleborough would be a practical option for future occupiers. Consequently, there would be heavy reliance on the private motor car to access goods, services and for employment, even though there is access to a bus service. I note the appellant has commented that the dwelling would be

occupied in association with running an agricultural business thereby minimising vehicular trips however no evidence on this matter has been provided.

11. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other decisions relating to single dwellings or small groups of dwellings which they state demonstrates that a housing shortfall and self-build delivery is a material consideration of substantial weight. Of these decisions, two concern development proposals that would form part of a cluster with other existing buildings and would not be detached or in a remote position from the settlement. The remaining five development proposals are located at the edge of settlements adjoining built development such that these proposals are also not detached from the settlement. For these reasons, whilst some of the examples provided involved self-build development, their locations within or immediately adjoining settlements are not comparable with the appeal proposal.
12. The proposal would extend the built form beyond the pattern of linear development and intrude into the undeveloped countryside. Whilst the proposal would to some extent be screened from the road by existing hedgerows and there is no reason to suggest a scheme could not be designed to minimise visibility at the technical design stage, it would be visible from parts of the PRow network.
13. Although I noted the presence of an agricultural barn within the field where the appeal site is partially positioned, the presence of agricultural structures are to be expected in a rural location. Domestic paraphernalia associated with residential use, such as parked cars and hard surfaced areas, would create a suburbanising effect undermining and eroding the attractive countryside appearance of the site and its surroundings causing significant harm.
14. The Council is satisfied that at this stage of a permission in principle application, the proposed amount of development could be physically accommodated on the site. Furthermore, that whilst the proposal would result in a loss of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, the Council consider this would not be significant given the extent of BMV agricultural land within the Vale of Aylesbury. Following my site visit, I find no reason to disagree.
15. However, for the reasons set out above, I conclude the site is not suitable for residential development with regard to its location and would be harmful to the character of the site and surrounding area. The proposal would be contrary to Policies S1, S2, S3 and T1 of the Local Plan and Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan which, taken together, seek to direct development to where it would be well related to existing settlements and with convenient access to local services by foot, cycle and public transport and encourages sustainable transport. Alongside setting the locational strategy for development in the Council area, the policies require that, amongst other criteria, proposals demonstrate that the siting of development respects, enhances and is informed by the character of both the site and its context.
16. These policies are broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character including the surrounding intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Other Matters

17. The submitted evidence refers to the eastern end of the access track, from the rear of Orchard Cottage to it meeting Singleborough Lane, lying within the Singleborough Conservation Area (CA). In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. The access track would be used during both the construction and operational phases to gain access to the appeal site. Whilst during the construction phase vehicles could be large, this would be tempered by the limited duration of the construction period and such vehicles being akin to agricultural vehicles. During the operational phase, given the proposal is for one dwelling, these movements would be modest. I note the Highway Authority have not raised concerns on this matter.
18. As I saw on my site visit, the access track is of single width and is not metalled. No doubt some improvement work would be required for the track to be used on a more frequent basis. However, such details would be required at the technical details consent stage. Insofar as can be assessed at this stage, I find no reason that the use of the access track would not preserve the character or appearance of the conservation area or harm its significance.
19. There would be a benefit from the delivery of a self-build dwelling to which the Framework and PPG encourage the delivery of suitable development permissions to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the area.
20. The Council's ecologist commented that it was extremely likely that protected species are located at the site, and a comprehensive Ecological Impact Assessment would be required. Furthermore, a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment would be needed unless the exemption criteria is met, which for a self-build project a proforma would be necessary. These matters would be dealt with at the technical details consent stage and so would be neutral in my assessment.
21. I note comments received from third parties regarding visibility, lighting and flooding. I have covered visibility above and am satisfied that lighting is a matter that would be at the technical details stage. I note the Council said within the officer's report that part of the access track to the site is located within areas at high and medium risk of surface water flooding and that such matters would be for consideration at the technical details stage which I concur with.

Planning Balance

22. Both parties agree that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. In its delegated report, the Council sets out that it can only demonstrate 3.62 years supply. This represents a moderate shortfall.
23. Paragraph 11 d) of the Framework explains in such situations permission should be granted unless there are any adverse impacts from the proposal that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
24. There would be a benefit from the delivery of an additional dwelling given the Council cannot demonstrate the requisite supply. The appellant has said it is

intended that the proposed dwelling would be self-build and so would also contribute to that supply where the appellant says there is a shortfall. There would also be economic benefits arising during the construction and occupation stages of the development. I attach limited weight to these given the small scale of the proposal.

25. I consider that the policies which are most important for determining the appeal application are broadly consistent with the Framework and the provision of one self-build dwelling would conflict and considerably harm the Council's objectives for these policies, as they seek to direct such development to the most sustainable and accessible locations. Consequently, I find that they still attract considerable weight. Furthermore, I find significant harm from the proposed development to the character and appearance of the countryside.
26. The location is not acceptable in-principle which is a planning harm that attracts considerable weight. The adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the proposal would not amount to sustainable development in the meaning of paragraph 11 of the Framework.

Conclusion

27. The appeal proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. For the reasons given, material considerations, including the policies within the Framework, have not been shown to carry sufficient weight to indicate the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

S F Murphy

INSPECTOR