
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 January 2026

by **JP Sargent BA(Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/W/24/3355396

Spring Paddocks, Gaydon Road, Bishop's Itchington, Southam, Warwickshire CV47 2QX

- 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 James Oliver-Byrne against the decision of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00745/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing timber stable block and the construction of a hay/straw storage barn and garaging for a horse box, and the construction of a single storey groom's dwelling within the footprint of the existing stable block.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are
 - a) whether the elements of the proposal are each acceptable in principle,
 - b) the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area,
 - c) whether it has been shown that any impact on protected species would be minimised and
 - d) if any harm is found in connection with any/all of the above, whether any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the scheme's benefits.

Reasons

The principle of the development

3. I was told that this 2ha site is used to accommodate a polo-cross team of some 17 to 19 horses. It currently contains a dwelling, a large modern stable block with stores and tack room, a smaller wooden stable block, a static caravan, a menage and a horse-walker, and these stand back from the road behind intervening paddocks.
4. As the site lies in the countryside, well away from the Built-Up Area Boundary of any settlement, Policy AS.10 of the *Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy* (the Core Strategy) is relevant. Having regard to the principles of sustainable development, it says that in such a location only certain forms of development will be acceptable in principle. This includes equine and equestrian related activities,

and a permanent dwelling for occupation by a person reasonably engaged in an agricultural operation or other form of use that can only be carried out in the countryside, subject to a functional need being established. This position is reaffirmed by Policy 1 of the *Bishop's Itchington Neighbourhood Development Plan* (the Neighbourhood Plan), which states that all new dwellings in the countryside will be strictly controlled in line with Core Strategy Policy AS.10. Such an approach, to my mind, is not inconsistent with the *National Planning Policy Framework*. This says decisions should enable the sustainable growth of rural businesses, and even in isolated locations a dwelling could be justified if there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near to their place of work in the countryside.

5. Starting first with the proposed dwelling, it was said that the size of the polo-cross team meant there was a need for a groom to live on site to care for the welfare of the horses. I understand they currently live in the static caravan. However, little evidence has been submitted about the nature of the polo-cross operation, how long it has been established, or whether it will remain viable into the foreseeable future. Furthermore, there is no detail as to the form of the need or care the groom is to deliver. Noting the large house now present on the site, I also have no firm grounds to justify a second dwelling associated with the enterprise. Therefore, on the evidence before me a functional or essential need for this permanent residential unit to allow the groom to live on site has not been established, and so it is not supported by Core Strategy Policy AS.10, Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 or the Framework.
6. In coming to this view I have little to confirm the planning status of the static caravan. I have therefore approached my reasoning above on the basis that it is not lawful and its long-term retention cannot be assumed. If it is in fact lawful and it is intended to be removed if the proposal is to be built, then as stated I have inadequate justification to support it being replaced by a permanent dwelling, and if it is to be retained, there is even less basis to justify what would be a third dwelling on the site. As such, whatever the planning status of the static caravan might be, it does not lead me to different conclusions on this issue.
7. Turning to the barn, in the appeal form it was confirmed this building would also be used, in part, to garage the horse box, but it has not been explained why this is necessary. I was told the remainder was required to store feed and bedding needed for the equestrian activity now on site. However, given the lack of detail about the nature and viability of the operation, and noting the scale of the building, I am not satisfied it has been shown that it is justified to support the activities that I was told were being undertaken on this relatively small unit.
8. Accordingly based on the evidence before me I conclude that, in principle, the development is inappropriate in this countryside location, and so contrary to Core Strategy Policy AS.10, Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 and the Framework.

Character and appearance

9. Core Strategy Policies AS.10, CS.5 and CS.9, along with Neighbourhood Plan Policy 4, together broadly require development to minimise its impact on the local environment by, amongst other things, having suitable regard to its landscape setting and reflecting the character and distinctiveness of the locality. Similarly, the Framework requires the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the

countryside, while its support for the growth of businesses in rural areas requires any new buildings to be well-designed.

10. The site lies in an area that, whilst having no specific designation, is nonetheless a pleasing rural landscape. The proposed dwelling would be only a single storey in height, replacing part of the larger stable building now on site, and remaining broadly within that building's current footprint and profile. Therefore, I consider it would not have an adverse effect on the existing character or appearance of the area.
11. The barn would be of a typical, utilitarian appearance that is common for agricultural buildings in rural areas. However, with its 6m high end gable it would be clearly visible when looking from the road, as from there it would be sited forward of the existing larger stables building, and would stand near the top of an incline. To my mind in such an exposed position there would be little to mitigate its impact. Rather, it would be a tall, dominant and striking feature that would fail to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the area, would fail to have regard to its landscape setting and would detract unacceptably from the surroundings.
12. Accordingly, I conclude that the barn would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Core Strategy Policies AS.10, CS.5 and CS.9, Neighbourhood Plan Policy 4, and the Framework.

Natural environment

13. The presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development should be established before planning permission is granted. Surveys undertaken in 2023 found roosting bats were in the larger building. However, due to the passage of time I consider these need to be updated in order to ensure full regard is given to any potential bat roosting that might now be present.
14. Accordingly, I conclude it has not been shown the scheme would not have an adverse effect on protected species. It is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS.6, which requires development to minimise its impact on biodiversity.

Planning balance

15. The Local Planning Authority can demonstrate a housing land supply of only 2.74 years, which is well below the required supply of at least 5 years. As such, under paragraph 11(d) of the Framework planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
16. It is contended the proposal would assist in the operation of the polo-cross activities, and so presumably benefit a rural enterprise. However, in the absence of any substantive details to show how it would assist or the nature and viability of the operations, the weight this can be afforded is limited. There would also be some economic benefits both during construction and once occupied, to which I attach moderate weight. However, assuming the proposal would bring forward an additional unit of accommodation rather than just a replacement for the caravan, I nonetheless attach great weight to the provision of a further house in a district where there is a notable shortfall, though recognise that the extent of this benefit is limited as only one dwelling is before me.

17. Overall, I consider the harms I have identified arising from the principle of the development, its effect on the character and appearance of the area and the failure to demonstrate that the impact on biodiversity would be minimised, when taken together, significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

Conclusion

18. Accordingly, I conclude that the adverse impacts of the scheme significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, and therefore the appeal should be dismissed.

JP Sargent

INSPECTOR