



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2026

by **E Pickernell BSc MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/M1710/W/25/3373502

Crossways, Trinity Road, Bentworth, Alton, Hampshire GU34 5NN

- 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 and Mrs J Whiteley against the decision of East Hampshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is EHDC-25-0165-FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing linked barns with consent to convert to a single residential dwelling; erection of a new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for a new dwelling having regard to access to services and facilities and the policies of the development plan;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - whether the proposed development makes suitable provision for access to the site with particular regard to the safety and convenience of users of Trinity Road; and
 - if harm is found, whether material considerations, including any fallback position justifies a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

Reasons

Location

3. The appeal site is located outside of any recognised settlement boundary and therefore for the purposes of the local plan, is in the open countryside. Policies CP2 and CP10 of The East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (Adopted by East Hampshire District Council May 2014) (JCS) set out the general, and housing specific spatial strategies for the area. They state that new development growth will be directed to the most sustainable and accessible locations in the district. New housing provision is to be achieved primarily through site allocations and development within defined settlement policy boundaries of towns and villages.

4. Policy CP10 states that small scale development outside settlement boundaries will only be permitted where it meets a community need, reinforces a settlement's role and function, cannot be accommodated within the built-up area and has been identified in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan or has clear community support.
5. Policy CP19 of the JCS is not referenced in the reason for refusal, although discussed in both the officer report and the appellant's statement. It states that the only development allowed in the countryside will be that with a genuine and proven need for a countryside location.
6. The proposal is for a market dwelling, and although the dwelling is proposed to replace the barn which is in a different location, it has not been demonstrated that it would meet a particular local need. Consequently, the proposed development is not in an appropriate location, having regard to development plan policies.
7. The appeal site is located on a rural road between the villages of Bentworth and Medstead. Bentworth has a range of services, and there is a bus service, albeit limited, to the market town of Alton which stops nearby on Trinity Road. However, accessing these by means other than a private car would involve walking or cycling along unlit roads, which do not benefit from foot or cycle paths. Whilst some users would be comfortable walking or cycling to either of the nearby villages, it would not be an attractive or practical proposition for all users, including those with limited mobility, travelling with children and especially in the dark, or poor weather.
8. Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, it also expects development to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements. I am not convinced that the facilities in the nearby villages or the bus stop could be safely accessed by foot or cycle, or that the public transport options would provide a realistic alternative to car travel for future residents. As such it is likely that future occupiers would be reliant on a private vehicle to meet the majority of their day-to-day needs. Harm would result as a consequence of poor accessibility and a lack of availability of transport options.
9. I conclude that the appeal site is not an appropriate location for a new dwelling having regard to access to services and facilities and the policies of the development plan. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP2, CP10 and CP19 of the JCS which seek to direct new development to the most sustainable and accessible locations and to protect the countryside.

Character and appearance

10. The part of the site where the new dwelling is proposed comprises an open grassed area, described in the submitted Landscape and Visual Assessment¹ (LVA) as a domestic paddock, which forms part of a larger open area to the east and north. There are scattered buildings in the vicinity including a small group of dwellings to the north of the site. However, the overall character of the area is distinctly rural, characterised primarily by open fields and the appeal site contributes positively to this character.
11. The appeal site is located within the Hampshire Downs character area which is generally characterised by rolling landscape and arable fields. The site is typical of

¹ Jon Etchells Consulting, February 2025

this character and is described in the LVA as being of medium landscape quality. However, it is relatively well contained by vegetation along the south and west boundaries of the site. This would limit the impact of the proposed development upon longer views towards the site and its contribution to the wider landscape character.

12. Nevertheless, the proposal would introduce a building, hard standing areas and associated paraphernalia into the site. Although the dwelling would be of an attractive design, the proposal would materially alter the character of the paddock, result in a domestic appearance and would extend the spread of built form south along Trinity Road. This would be visible to passersby through the landscaped boundary and the access opening. As such the proposal would have an urbanising effect and would result in the erosion of the rural character of the area.
13. The proposal includes the demolition of existing barns to the northeast of the site and their replacement with topsoil and grass. However, the barns are an established feature of the area, are rural in character and do not appear incongruous in this context. As such their demolition would result in only a modest improvement to the character and appearance of the area. This improvement would not be sufficient to offset the harm that I have identified would result from the proposed dwelling.
14. Overall, I conclude that the proposed dwelling would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP20 and CP29 of the JCS which together seek to ensure that development proposals conserve and enhance the natural environment and respect the character and identity of the countryside.

Access

15. In response to the second reason for refusal, the appellant has submitted the results of a speed survey which was carried out at the site. The resultant required visibility splays vary depending on whether guidance is taken from the Manual for Streets or upon the Hampshire County Council Technical Guidance Note 3.
16. Nevertheless, the appellant has provided evidence that either requirement could be fulfilled. The Council is now content that the provision of adequate visibility splays could be secured through the imposition of a planning condition, if the appeal was allowed.
17. Based on the evidence before me it would be possible to provide acceptable visibility splays which would ensure that the access would be safe and suitable for the proposed development. I am content that this could be secured by condition.
18. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would make suitable provision for access to the site with particular regard to the safety and convenience of users of Trinity Road. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy CP31 of the JCS insofar as it seeks to ensure that development meets the need for highway safety.

Other Considerations

19. The appellant has referred to a fallback position in respect of conversion of existing barns to a dwelling. The barns are within their ownership and accessed via Jenny Green Lane, to the northeast of the location of the proposed dwelling.

20. The parties agree that the consent² for the conversion is extant and as such there is a greater than theoretical possibility that the approved development might take place. Consequently, I accept that the conversion scheme represents a legitimate fallback position.
21. Although the fallback scheme would result in a dwelling with similar issues in respect of accessibility as the appeal scheme, it would result in the re-use of an existing rural building, which is supported by development plan policies. As such the fallback scheme would not result in the same degree of conflict with the development plan.
22. The existing barn buildings and the dwelling that would result from their conversion, are of a simple, agricultural appearance. By contrast, the proposed dwelling would be overtly domestic in character. Furthermore, although the dwellings volume, footprint and proximity to the road would be less than the barns, it would occupy a larger plot than the barns resulting in a more urban appearance to the area, overall.
23. As such I consider that the appeal scheme would be more harmful than the approved scheme. Therefore, the fallback position carries limited weight in favour of the proposal.

Other Matters

24. The appellant contends that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with supply said to stand at 3.59 years. The Council have not disputed this. However, the proposal would not result in a net increase in housing supply, given that it would entail the demolition of barns which have consent for conversion to a dwelling.
25. Nevertheless, I recognise that the proposal would bring about benefits in terms of the provision of a modern, self-build home. However, these benefits are not of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the harms I have identified in respect of conflict with the development plan policy, the accessibility of the site and the impact upon the character and appearance of the area. Taken together, the overall harm would be significant. The lack of identified harm in respect of highway safety, biodiversity and trees is a neutral factor in the appeal.

Conclusion

26. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

E Pickernell

INSPECTOR

² Ref: 24528/017