



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 January 2026

by **A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/G2435/W/25/3371800

Alton House, Alton Hill, Ravenstone, Leicestershire LE67 2DL

- 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 Pratt against the decision of North West Leicestershire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00686/FUL.
 - The development proposed is formation of a multi-sport court (for personal use) including change of use of land for ancillary residential purposes.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for formation of a multi-sport court (for personal use) including change of use of land for ancillary residential purposes at Alton House, Alton Hill, Ravenstone, Leicestershire LE67 2DL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00686/FUL, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Main Issues

2. Whether the site is suitably located for the development proposed. With particular regard to the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is in a rural location. The area is characterised by occasional and isolated countryside development, which sits within an agricultural and wooded landscape. The land rises to the east but is otherwise fairly level in the area of the appeal site, which provides attractive open views from the site and from the public right of way (RoW) to the south.
4. The appeals site forms part of the developed area of the dwelling and is currently used as equestrian paddocks. A manege is to the east of the site, with a stable building immediately to the north and an agricultural hay/implement store to the south. The land to the west is undeveloped. The existing post and rail fencing that encloses the paddocks is prominent when viewed from the west and south, and more prominent than the hedges and estate railings that enclose other nearby areas.
5. Policy S3 of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan 2021 (LP) seeks to restrict development in countryside locations. Supporting text to the Policy establishes that its aims are to safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside, and maintain and where possible enhance its environmental, economic and social

value. It provides a list of development types that will be supported, subject to a further set of criteria. This includes recreation and tourism uses.

6. The Council is of the view that an extension to residential curtilage is not within the spirit in which the leisure category was intended. However, the Policy does not define what is meant by recreation, and in particular there is nothing to suggest that an acceptable recreation use can only be a public one. In this case there can be no doubt that a proposal for a tennis court is a recreation use, and would be appropriate in the context of the existing equestrian use.
7. To receive support from Policy S3, the proposal must also safeguard and enhance the appearance and character of the landscape. The proposal relates to an area that is already enclosed. The existing post and rail fence would be utilised as the boundary. This would be supplemented with a native hedgerow and accompanied by new tree planting. The existing view of the prominent post and rail fencing would therefore be improved by the planting of the native hedge, which would enclose the open sides of the existing area in a naturalistic manner, and provide a better definition between the developed parts of the site and the surrounding open countryside.
8. The tennis court surface would be hidden from view between the proposed hedge and trees, and the mature and established vegetation to the east, that is beyond the manege. I do accept that screening through landscaping does not automatically mean that character and appearance is not affected. However, in this case the area of the appeal site is already defined, so there would be no additional incursion into the countryside. Additionally, the provision of a hedge, which would be a logical addition alongside the existing boundary, would improve the appearance of the site when viewed from the open areas of countryside to the west and south. Furthermore, even without the hedge, owing to the level topography, the surface of the tennis court would not be prominent to view.
9. The area is generally characterised by large fields. The appeal site is small in comparison. Whilst its subdivision from the wider field would be formalised by the proposed hedge, it is already defined by the post and rail fence; and defining its boundaries with a traditional hedge would be an improvement. This would be enhanced by planting trees, which would support the objectives of the National Forest. However, the regular planting of trees alongside the hedgerow as indicated on the proposed plan would not necessarily accord with the naturalistic appearance of field boundaries in the area. If the appeal is allowed this could be addressed by requiring additional landscaping details via a condition.
10. The tennis court would be provided in the context of a dwelling that already has extensive areas of attractive and private domestic garden. As a result, it is unlikely that the area of the tennis court would be put to general garden use as there would be no need for this, and it would be further from the dwelling than the existing areas of garden. In any case, given that it is not elevated and its boundaries would provide screening, the accumulation of domestic paraphernalia within the site area should not be harmful. Furthermore, glimpses of people playing tennis or other sports in the area would not appear out of place in the context of the adjacent manege and in close proximity to the dwelling.
11. The Council refers to the impact of cumulative changes. It is however necessary for me to assess the proposal on the basis of the evidence before me and the

characteristics and constraints of the site as they exist at the present time. In this respect, the existing buildings and development provide relevant context to the proposal, and for the reasons given I have found that the proposal would not cause harm. Any further proposals would need to be considered afresh and on their own merits.

12. Thus, the proposal would satisfy part (i) of the Policy and would accord with parts (ii) to (v). Part (vi) is irrelevant for the proposal, as it would serve the existing dwelling rather than result in an increase to the number of people accessing the site.
13. The appeal site is within the National Forest. I have found that the proposal would not harm the general character or appearance of the area, and would result in some enhancement by providing better definition to the edge of the current domestic and recreation uses associated with the dwelling. It would include tree planting and would sit well in the landscape close to mature trees to the east. I am therefore also satisfied that the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the National Forest.
14. In summary, the site would be suitably located for the development proposed and the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the area. It would accord with Policies S3, En3 and D1 of the LP and Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), which together seek to ensure that development in the countryside is restricted and that its intrinsic character and beauty is recognised, and that it does not harm the character or appearance of the area including that of the National Forest.

Other Matters

15. Alton House is a grade II listed building. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) require the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
16. I have reviewed the submissions and note the Council's position regarding this. I have found that the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the area. The site is prominently positioned in relation to Alton House, however it would be well integrated by the provision of a hedge and tree planting, and in any case would be provided within an area that is already defined. It would be located in the context of ancillary and secondary buildings at the site and would not be visible upon the main approach to the front of the dwelling or have any impact on its principal façades. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal would not harm the special interest of the listed building and this matter should not be a main issue of the appeal.
17. The appeal site is within the catchment area of the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Discharge into the river from surface water disposal can result in an adverse effect on the SAC. On the basis that a condition could be imposed to ensure that the proposed soakaway system would be sufficient to deal with the additional surface water generated by the proposal, and on the basis that Natural England advises that a likely significant effect can be ruled out, I am satisfied that an adverse effect would not occur. Accordingly, this does not need to be a main issue of the appeal.

Conditions

18. I have had regard to the conditions suggested by the Council. I have considered these against the tests in the Framework and the PPG. I have imposed condition 2 to specify the approved plans, to give certainty.
19. I have imposed conditions 3 and 5 to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.
20. I have imposed condition 4 to require the submission of details of a drainage scheme that is necessary to avoid harm to the SAC.
21. I have imposed condition 6 to prevent the installation of lighting in association with the development. The appellant suggests that this condition could be re-worked to require the submission of details of lighting to be agreed prior to installation. However, lighting a tennis court in a rural area that benefits from dark skies is a significant matter, particularly as the level of lighting that would be required to allow tennis to be played in the dark would be considerable. Lighting is not proposed as part of the submission, and it is thus reasonable to assume that the development would be utilised during daylight hours. The appellant would need to submit a further application for planning permission if lighting is desired.
22. There is no need to include the mandatory biodiversity gain condition as it is deemed to apply in any case under the provisions of 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons above, the appeal should be allowed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos CLT/24/003/02 and PL102.
- 3) No development shall commence until details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:
 - earthworks showing existing and proposed finished levels or contours;
 - hard surfacing materials, including details of the colour of the tennis court surface;
 - colour of the mesh to be applied to the existing post and rail fence; and
 - tree planting alongside the native hedge.

All planting comprised in the approved details, including the provision of the linear native hedgerow detailed on the approved plans, shall be carried out in the first planting season after the development is first brought into use; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the date they are planted, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

- 4) No development shall take place until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details, and the drainage scheme shall be maintained for the lifetime of the development.
- 5) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no boundary treatments or means of enclosure shall be erected in association with the development hereby approved, other than those detailed on the approved plans.
- 6) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no external lighting shall be installed in association with the development hereby approved.