
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2025 by S Indermaur BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/25/3364983

Valley View Barn, Winchbottom Lane, Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire HP10 9QF

- 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 Mark G Bryant against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/06838.
 - The development proposed is the conversion and subdivision of existing residential property together with alterations and extension and demolition of existing buildings, to form additional dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Applications for Costs

3. An application for an award of costs was made by Mark G Bryant against Buckinghamshire Council. This is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters and Main Issues

4. The Council does not object to the appeal scheme in regard to its effect on the special character and scenic beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL). Given the nature of the proposals as a part conversion scheme with contextually acceptable alterations and extensions, along with the demolition of some existing structures, and it's immediate setting as part of a small enclave of built form adjacent Winchbottom Lane, I have no reason to disagree. I do not see therefore that the appeal proposals would fail to further the purposes of the CNL.
5. The Council has found that the proposals would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt by virtue of their compliance with an exception in paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework). In so finding, the Council is also satisfied that the effect on the openness of the Green Belt would be acceptable. I have no reason to disagree with their conclusions in either respect.
6. The main issues of the appeal are therefore a) whether the appeal site is a suitable location for new housing having regard to the Council's spatial strategy; and b) if the scheme would be inappropriate development, whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, would be

clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify it.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Location for New Housing

7. Policies CP4 and DM21 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019 (LP) state that houses will be supported at allocated sites. The appeal site is not part of an adopted allocation. Policy DM33 of the LP outlines, amongst other things, that development will be required to be located to provide safe, direct and convenient access to jobs, services and facilities via sustainable transport modes. Moreover, Policy CP12 seeks to minimise the need to travel, directing development to locations with better services and facilities.
8. Services, facilities and workplaces are not located within close proximity to the appeal site. It is actually very rural and located some considerable distance away from the nearest settlement. Separated from such by winding, sometimes single width, unlit rural roads without segregated footways. The site itself is positioned next to such a single track lane. As such, it would not be safe or convenient for the future occupiers of the proposed dwelling to cycle or walk. In addition, there does not appear to be any bus routes in the immediate vicinity. Occupiers would therefore be mostly, if not solely, reliant on the use of the private car to travel. This is the least sustainable travel option.
9. There is a park and ride located north of the M40, but this is still some distance away and one would likely have to use a car to access it for the reasons I have set out above. By the time an occupier has used this method, they would be close to a more populated area anyway. An electric vehicle charging point could be installed and a condition imposed could insist upon such. However, said condition would not be able to force an occupant to own an electric vehicle. Even if it could, this would still amount to the proposals generating numerous solo trips to and from the appeal site via the least sustainable transport mode.
10. The appeal site would have limited access to sustainable transport options which would, as a consequence, not provide a suitable location for housing. In this regard, the proposal would serve to encourage unsustainable patterns of development which would conflict with Policies CP4, CP12, DM21 and DM33 of the LP.

Other Considerations

11. Occupiers of converted rural buildings may be reliant on the private car purely by reason of their very location. To a point, the same could be said of the appeal scheme, but this primarily involves the subdivision of an existing dwelling comprising an already converted building (in part), the demolition of an existing link, the erection of another and the changing of an existing garage to part of a new house. The majority of the scheme therefore does not 'convert' the buildings, but reconfigures their internal spaces to form a new independent dwelling.
12. The proposal may be also be closer to facilities and services in comparison to development in other rural locations. However, putting aside the overarching aims of the LP in terms of its spatial strategy for new housing would undermine what is seeks to achieve. This could have precedent value which would encourage the establishment of unsustainable patterns of development.

13. The appeal scheme would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Whilst this also relates to the principle of the type of development in the location it would be, it is still for the Council to determine, if they are minded to do so, whether the location would be suitable for new housing alongside their adopted spatial strategy. The relevant policies of which I have referred to above. A given proposal might not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, but it does not follow that it would not promote unsustainable patterns of development.
14. I am aware that the appeal scheme would provide an additional unit of housing in an undersupply situation for the Council of some significance. There would be some further socio economic benefits associated with this and it would take place on previously developed land. That said, the net addition of one dwelling would make a very limited difference to the undersupply situation, and the additional benefits would be limited by both time and the scale of the scheme. Taken together, and for these reasons, these matters would be worthy of moderate weight.
15. Any compliance with other development plan policies relating to where the appeal scheme might be, would be a lack of harm and would not make up for the conflict with the others I have cited. Further, it is suggested that Policy DM21 of the LP is not relevant as it refers to schemes of ten or more units. It is my understanding that this relates to Policy DM22. My findings do not therefore change.
16. Whilst the Framework is an expression of national government planning policy, it is a material consideration in planning decisions and should not be read in isolation. In any event, even if the proposal satisfied aspects thereof, in this circumstance, the proposal would not enhance or maintain the services within the wider surrounding area by reason of the scale of the proposal and its location. Whilst there is nothing in the Framework to suggest explicitly that the use of a private car would not in itself make a development unsustainable, it is clear that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Moreover, the proposal does not pursue opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport and taking into account the environmental impacts of traffic. Consequently, the scheme would conflict with the environmental aims of the Framework in any event.

Conclusion and Recommendation

17. The appeal scheme would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There would however be conflict with the Council's spatial strategy insofar as it would serve to promote unsustainable patterns of development. This would be an other harm. I would relate to the principle of the appeal site's acceptability for new housing and as such I would ascribe it substantial weight. Taken together, the other considerations that have been investigated would attract moderate weight. This would patently be insufficient to clearly outweigh the harm I have found. As such, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the appeal scheme do not exist. Even in the event that other considerations were not required to 'clearly' outweigh the harm, it would still be difficult to see, given the weight I have given to both sides, that it would be sufficient to result in the appeal being allowed.
18. I have alluded to the Council's housing supply situation above. I am also mindful of the first part of paragraph 11 of the Framework which sets out, amongst other things, that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies

which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (such as in a housing under supply situation), permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. My earlier findings point to unresolved harm relating to development on land designated as Green Belt. This would be, for the purposes of footnote 7 of paragraph 11, a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

19. In the event that the balance mechanisms of the second part of paragraph 11 were engaged, it would be for the decision to grant planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
20. I have set out the harm above and the weight it would attract. It would result in conflict with the Framework, namely the principle stance of directing development to places with the most sustainable access to services and facilities and reducing the need to travel. The location for the development would be inherently unsustainable and it would not provide affordable housing. I have no concerns over the design of the scheme, and it would make effective use of a brownfield site. I have also explained why the benefits and the contribution to housing supply would be limited and taking these other positive aspects against the Framework into account, I find that they would still be worthy of moderate weight.
21. As such, and should the second part of paragraph 11 be relevant, the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The proposals would not therefore be sustainable development (for the Framework's purposes) for which the presumption in favour would apply. Taking this and all of the above into account, material considerations do not indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan, with which the appeal scheme would conflict for the reasons I have set out. I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Indermaur

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

22. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR