



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 January 2026

by **L Francis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/T2215/W/25/3375289

Land adjacent to Ryecroft Farm, Green Street Green Road, Darenth, Kent DA2 8DX

- 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 J Friend against the decision of Dartford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is DA/25/00584/COU.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing stable building to a dwelling (Use Class C3).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the conversion of existing stable building to a dwelling (Use Class C3) at Land adjacent to Ryecroft Farm, Green Street Green Road, Darenth, Kent DA2 8DX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00584/COU, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matter

2. On 16 December 2025, the Government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Whilst broad changes to the structure of the Framework are proposed as part of this consultation, these proposals could be subject to further change and can only be given very limited weight at this stage. It has therefore not been necessary to consult the parties on the changes, and in reaching my decision, I have had regard to the Framework published in December 2024.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed dwelling having regard to the Council's strategy for the location of development.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a field with an access from Green Street Green Road. An L shaped building is located at the south-western corner of the field, accessed via a track. The proposal involves the conversion of the building to a single dwelling, with some alterations including a new door and windows. There would also be additional post and mesh fencing to separate the residential plot from the land to the north of the entrance, which would be retained as a separate field. The parties agree that the site is previously developed land.
5. Policy S1 of Dartford Borough's Local Plan to 2037 (Local Plan) sets out the borough's spatial strategy which aims to achieve a diverse and complementary balance of uses and services within settlements and minimise the necessity to travel

by private vehicles. Alongside prioritising development within central Dartford and Ebbsfleet Garden City, development is also directed to brownfield land not within the Green Belt, and to sites with good access by public transport and walking/cycling to a range of local supporting services and infrastructure.

6. Local Plan Policy S5 specifically sets out the borough's spatial priorities for new dwellings. Part 2 of the policy is relevant to windfall development, stating that residential development will be supported where the benefits of the proposal outweigh the disbenefits, including the sustainability of the site's location. Policy S3 requires development to be well located to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, as well as contributing to minimising carbon emissions and reducing the need for unsustainable travel.
7. The character of the area is rural, with sporadic residential and commercial development lining Green Street Green Road. The appeal site is located in a loose cluster of commercial and residential uses which is separated from the nearest village, Longfield, by open countryside. Although the Council do not consider the appeal site to have immediate residential neighbours, there are dwellings opposite and to the north of the adjacent field, within reasonable proximity. The cluster of dwellings and commercial uses is not served by any shops or services essential to everyday life. Nevertheless, the dwellings in the vicinity of the appeal site indicate that there is a residential community and the proposed dwelling would make a small contribution to social sustainability to the existing community and which would also support services in nearby settlements.
8. There is a bus stop very close to the appeal site. The northbound stop is accessible via a paved footway. The southbound stop with services running towards Longfield does not have a footway adjacent and would be more awkward to access. The buses are regular but not frequent on weekdays and Saturdays. The bus route serves Dartford, Darent Valley Hospital, schools and Bluewater shopping centre, along with the more local shops and services of Longfield. I consider the locations served by the bus service would be useful in meeting everyday needs, despite the limited frequency of service.
9. There is a paved footway running into Longfield, the built edge of which is just over 1km from the appeal site. Whilst it would be a level walk to Longfield, it would be alongside a road with a 40mph speed limit where some sections are unlit. Cycling would be possible, with a relatively short, level ride into Longfield, though again, this would not be an option for all.
10. As such, I consider there would be reasonable accessibility to services, facilities and employment by means other than a car, although this would fall short of the 'good' accessibility to facilities referred to by the supporting text to Local Plan Policy S5.
11. Drawing the above factors together, I conclude the proposal would not amount to an isolated home in the countryside in the context of Framework paragraph 84. In reaching this conclusion, I have had regard to the Court of Appeal judgment of *Braintree DC v SSCLG, Greyread Ltd & Granville Developments Ltd* [2018] EWCA Civ 610 to which I have been referred.
12. Pursuant to Policy S5, a balancing exercise is required in relation to small windfall sites. Even though the Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, I attach moderate weight to the provision of an additional dwelling on previously developed land. The dwelling would contribute to social sustainability, and there

would also be biodiversity benefits arising from the proposed native species planting, to which I attach moderate weight. Whilst there would be a small disbenefit from the location of the proposal in relation to access to services and facilities, I do not find there would be unacceptable harm in this respect given the acknowledgement of the Framework that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, which should be taken into account in decision making.

13. Although the appeal scheme was not refused for the reasons of character and appearance, the Council identify a limited disbenefit in terms of effect of the proposed domestic use on the rural character of the site. I agree that there would be a limited effect upon the rural character of the site.
14. The appeal scheme's acceptability in other respects including the size and standard of accommodation, the effect on the living conditions of nearby residents and the proposal being considered not inappropriate development in the Green Belt, are neutral considerations in this balance.
15. Pursuant to the balancing exercise required by Local Plan Policy S5, I find that the appeal scheme would be acceptable. A windfall development of a single dwelling in this location would be unlikely to result in preventing the achievement of, or undermining, the Council's planned spatial strategy as set out in Local Plan Policy S1. As nearby services and facilities could be reached by means other than the private car, I do not consider that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm in the context of Local Plan Policy S3 insofar as it aims to reduce the need for unsustainable travel.

Other Matters

16. My attention has been drawn to 2 recent appeal decisions which the Council considers as relevant to this appeal. An appeal at Church View Stables, Middleton Cheyney (reference APP/W2845/W/24/3355490) appears to relate to an additional building in open countryside, and it was not disputed that the proposal would constitute an isolated home in the countryside. As such, I consider it has limited direct relevance to the scheme before me.
17. Secondly, the appeal at The Stables, Sherfield on Loddon (reference APP/H1705/W/22/3313282) concerned a proposal for a bungalow which the Inspector considered would constitute an isolated home in the countryside, due to its remoteness from services even though it was located adjacent to one other residential dwelling. I do not consider this situation to be directly comparable to the appeal scheme, since the dwelling in question appears to be more removed from any surrounding development than is the case in the scheme before me. In any event, I am required to consider this proposal on its own merits in light of the evidence submitted and individual circumstances of the appeal.
18. The Council consider the proposal to not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, under Framework paragraph 154g. I agree with this assessment, and I am satisfied that there would not be substantial harm to openness arising from the proposal.
19. To the south of the appeal site, beyond the adjacent commercial use, lies the Grade II listed building of Ryecroft Farmhouse. The significance of the building is derived from its vernacular architecture including its timber frame, parallel ranges and

weatherboarding. Its agricultural setting has been somewhat compromised by surrounding commercial and residential development. It is principally experienced in views from Green Street Green Road, which are somewhat screened by planting. Walnut Tree Farmhouse is located to the north of the site, and is also listed Grade II. Its significance is derived from its age and vernacular architecture. It is experienced in views from Green Street Green Road and Gill's Road, heavily screened by the perimeter wall and trees.

20. I have had regard to the statutory duty set out in s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) with respect to the desirability of preserving the settings of Ryecroft Farmhouse and Walnut Tree Farmhouse. There would be some intervisibility between the appeal site and the listed buildings. However, given the location of the appeal proposal in the south-western section of the field, the intervening commercial use to the south, the field to the north and the distance of the proposed dwelling from each listed building, I consider the proposal would preserve the setting of each of the listed buildings and the contribution the settings make to their significance.
21. The proposed dwelling would be of a suitable size and layout with a large garden. Although the appellant indicates that it comprises 1-2 bedrooms, I note the second room labelled as a study is not of a sufficient size to qualify as a single bedroom under the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS).
22. The dwelling would be located adjacent to a commercial use. Acoustic mitigation has been identified in the submitted noise assessment and would need to be secured by condition to ensure an appropriate internal living environment for future occupiers.
23. The Council suggest that the site would be de minimis for the purposes of Biodiversity Net Gain. Based on the evidence submitted, I am satisfied that this would be the case, and as such the proposal would not be subject to the pre-commencement biodiversity gain plan condition pursuant to Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
24. I note the appellant intends to pursue the scheme as a self-build dwelling and that the Framework encourages such sites to come forward. Normally such housing would be secured via a legal obligation. However, given that I have found no conflict with the spatial strategy and concluded that the location is suitable for residential development, there is no requirement within the relevant policies to secure the proposed development as self-build.

Conditions

25. The Council has provided some suggested conditions which I have considered against advice in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. Consequently, I have amended or omitted some of the suggested wording. I have attached the standard commencement time limit condition and plans condition (1 and 2) as this provides clarity.
26. I have amended condition 3 suggested by the Council, as I agree that the appellant has shown sufficient landscaping detail on the submitted plan. The condition to secure the planting scheme is necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the area. Condition 4 regarding lighting detail is necessary in the interests of ensuring the character and appearance of the area is maintained, along with ensuring any lighting would not be harmful to bats. I do not see that these

details would be necessary prior to occupation, but would need to be agreed prior to the installation of external lighting.

27. I have not attached the Council's recommended conditions which would remove permitted development rights including extensions, alterations, porches, outbuildings, fences and hardstanding. The suggested conditions do not specify which classes of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) they are intending to restrict.
28. The Framework states that planning conditions should not be used to restrict national permitted development rights unless there is a clear justification to do so. The Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph reference 21a-017-20190723) (PPG) states that conditions restricting the future use of permitted development rights may not pass the tests of reasonableness or necessity. Furthermore, it advises that area-wide or blanket removal of freedoms to carry out small scale domestic alterations, which would otherwise not require an application for planning permission, are unlikely to meet the tests of reasonableness and necessity.
29. The GPDO does not make any concessions for Green Belt land in its allowances for domestic extensions and alterations, and permitted development is subject to controls regarding scale and appearance within the GPDO itself. I do not consider that there is clear justification in this case to restrict domestic permitted development rights pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 1 of the GPDO.
30. Condition 5 is necessary in the interests of water efficiency, and condition 6 is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient space for parking and manoeuvring in the interests of highway safety.
31. I have added a condition (7) requiring the recommendations of the acoustic report to be completed to ensure that the internal living conditions for future occupiers are acceptable.

Conclusion

32. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

L Francis

INSPECTOR

Schedule

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing numbers 4378/01, 4378/05, 4378/06A, 4378/07.
3. The planting shown on drawing number 4358/05 shall be implemented prior to first occupation (unless this falls outside of the planting season in which case it shall be implemented at the first opportunity during the following planting season, between October and March inclusive). Any trees, shrubs or grassed areas which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced within the next planting season with plants of similar species and size.
4. Prior to the installation of any external lighting, a lighting plan with consideration for biodiversity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall be based on the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting' (or subsequent updates).

The plan shall include the following:

- The identification of areas/features on- and/or off-site where disturbance could occur to bat breeding/roosting sites and/or foraging/commuting routes;
- The provision of an appropriate plan(s) to show how and where external lighting will be installed;
- The provision of technical specifications for the external lighting along with an explanation of how the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting' (and/or subsequent updates) has been considered during the lighting selection process.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the plan, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the plan.

5. The dwelling hereby approved shall not be occupied until the Building Regulations optional requirement of a water consumption rate of no more than 110 litres per person per day has been complied with.
6. The car parking spaces, turning areas and means of access shown on drawing number 4378/05 shall be provided prior to occupation of the dwelling hereby approved and kept available for such use at all times for as long as the development remains in place.
7. The scheme of mitigation set out in the acoustic report by Ned Johnson Acoustic Consultants reference 742425 dated 28 April 2025 shall be completed prior to first occupation of the dwelling and retained thereafter. The acoustic mitigation shall achieve levels not exceeding 30dB LAeq (night) in bedrooms and 35dB LAeq (day) for other habitable rooms, with windows shut and other means of ventilation provided.