



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2026

by J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/25/3375794

Unit 3 Crouch Industrial Estate, Barnett Wood Lane, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7DG

- 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 Paloma Capital against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref is MO/2025/0430.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing unit and erection of a replacement building to provide self-storage floorspace across four levels (Use Class B8).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for demolition of the existing unit and erection of a replacement building to provide self-storage floorspace across four levels (Use Class B8) at Unit 3 Crouch Industrial Estate, Barnett Wood Lane, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7DG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref MO/2025/0430, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. Although the application form only identified the site as the Crouch Industrial Estate, the main parties have confirmed that the proposal relates to Unit 3, which is the address I have used.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of 24 and 25 Barnett Close, with particular reference to outlook and sense of enclosure;
 - the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of properties near the site entrance on Barnett Wood Lane, with particular reference to noise; and
 - the effect of the development on on-street parking and the highways network.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located centrally within Crouch Industrial Estate, which is designated as a Strategic Employment Area. Unit 3 is a two storey industrial building, similar in appearance to others within the estate. Adjacent to the state is a railway line, whilst on the opposite side of Kingston Road are industrial buildings of a similar character to those on the Crouch Industrial Estate. Elsewhere, the local context is primarily that of two storey dwellings, interspersed with flats, some of which are more than two storeys high. Local topography is such that ground levels within the estate rise in the direction of Kingston Road.
5. Planning permission was previously granted to extend the building on the appeal site and add an additional storey, to create a three storey self storage facility¹. This permission was not implemented and has now expired. Notwithstanding that the Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039 Adopted October 2024 (MVLPA) postdates the granting of that permission, meaning that I cannot be certain of the policy context against which it was assessed, I have attached moderate weight to it as a relatively recent planning permission.
6. The Built Up Areas Character Appraisal for Leatherhead (BUCA), adopted 23 February 2010, constitutes supplementary planning guidance and is a material consideration. It identifies the railway corridor as a character area, where older manufacturing uses are tucked away on small sites behind main road frontages. The BUCA identifies key characteristics of the business parks, including reference to generally uninspiring architecture which is beginning to date, and considers it beneficial that they are generally in backland locations that do not form a dominant part of the street scene.
7. The Crouch Industrial Estate has two main road frontages, to Kingston Road and Barnett Wood Lane. Kingston Road is elevated where it crosses the railway line, and from my observations the appeal site is screened from this vantage point by buildings located closer to Kingston Road. The estate is set back from Barnett Wood Road behind intervening buildings but is visible from the site entrance and from the car showroom situated in front of the estate. The estate also abuts Barnett Close, from where there are glimpsed views of the appeal site in the gaps between houses. The appeal site is visible from Buffers Lane, on the opposite side of the railway line, where it is visible above intervening industrial buildings.
8. The appellant has supplied computer generated images (CGIs) of the proposal, the accuracy of which has not contested by the Council, and which I have therefore had regard to them when making my assessment. For the avoidance of doubt, I have relied on the images in Appendix 4 of the Appellant Statement of Case (Figures 15, 16 and 17 in the letter to the Council dated 7 August 2025), rather than the appellant's earlier images. For comparison purposes, the CGIs superimpose both the proposed building and the previously permitted building on views from Kingston Road, Barnett Wood Lane and Barnett Close.
9. The proposal is to replace the existing building with one which would be larger in both floor area and height, albeit with a lower floor level than the existing building. The eaves of the proposed building would be similar in height to the previously

¹ LPA reference MO/2021/2169

consented flat roofed building and slightly above the ridge height of the industrial buildings located between it and Kingston Road. By virtue of having a pitched roof, the building would be higher than the consented scheme, and the appellant's site sections show it being higher than any other buildings on the estate.

10. From Kingston Road, the pitched roof of the proposal would be visible above the roofs of the intervening industrial buildings and against the skyline. Owing to the irregular shape of the building, the roof would appear as a wide structure, angled away from Kingston Road. However, a key component of the view from the Kingston Road is the three storey flats on Kingston Square, located on the opposite side of the railway line from the estate, compared with which the proposal would not be a dominant feature. Moreover, the height of the bridge parapet means that the roof of the proposal would not generally be visible to people in cars, although it would be visible to pedestrians. Taking these factors together, the proposal would be perceived as being in keeping with the existing context, rather than being an imposing physical feature.
11. The Crouch Industrial Estate is set back from Barnett Wood Lane and does not contribute significantly to the road's character and appearance. The proposed building would be screened from Barnett Wood Lane by intervening buildings, and whilst it would be bulkier and taller than the existing building, it would be perceived in glimpsed views in the context of the existing industrial estate. I have had regard to the fact that the Council previously found the visual impact of a building of similar massing, albeit not as tall, to be acceptable. The proposal would not be unduly prominent when seen from Barnett Wood Lane.
12. From Barnett Close the proposal would be bulkier than the existing building in gaps between the houses, but it would be seen in a glimpsed views and therefore would not draw the eye. As a consequence, the building would not appear prominent.
13. The existing building's ridgeline is visible above the intervening industrial buildings from Buffers Lane and Kingston Road beyond. The eaves and pitched roof of the proposal would be seen above the existing buildings and against the skyline. However, given the distance between the appeal site and these public vantage points, the proposal would be perceived as part of the backdrop of the estate rather than being a dominant feature. Moreover, I am mindful that the Council previously approved a building whose eaves would have been visible through the same gap. The proposal would have an acceptable visual impact from this vantage point.
14. The design of the building would reflect those of others on the Crouch Industrial Estate, utilising a pitched roof and external cladding. The proposed horizontal cladding would feature a range of colours, from olive green around the base to progressively lighter colours on the upper parts of the building. Such a contemporary appearance would be at odds with the remainder of the estate and would draw attention to the building, contrary to guidance in the BUCA that the business parks are not dominant parts of the street scene as they are located on backland. As external materials can be dealt with through the discharge of conditions, it is open to me to attach a condition that external materials be approved, notwithstanding those shown on the appellant's plans.
15. Taking into account all of the above factors, I find that that whilst the proposal would be visible above the existing roofline of the industrial estate and consequently would alter the visual perception of the estate from some vantage

points, the height and appearance of the enlarged building would not depart so significantly from the prevailing character and appearance of the area as to be out of keeping with it or to cause harm to it. In reaching this conclusion, I have had due regard to the previous permission for an enlarged building with a comparable massing but a lower roof than the proposal.

16. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area and would accord with Policy EN4 of the MVLP, which requires all new development to be of high-quality design that makes a positive contribution to its local character, including responding to the prevailing pattern of development and being of an appropriate scale, height, massing, proportion and form. The proposal would satisfy the requirement in paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that developments be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment while optimising the potential of the site.

Living conditions – Barnett Close

17. There is a line of sight between 24 and 25 Barnett Close (Nos 24 and 25) and the appeal site owing to a gap between the industrial buildings which abut Barnett Close. The proposal would result in a taller building which would be visible to occupiers of the properties. However, the enlarged building would be some distance away from the dwellings, and the outlook from the dwellings would continue to be principally that of the industrial buildings closest to their rear boundary, notwithstanding that these buildings are offset to an extent from the affected properties. Although the proposal would change the outlook from these properties, it would not have an overbearing impact or create an undue sense of enclosure.
18. I find that the proposal would not harm the living conditions of occupiers of Nos 24 and 25 and would accord with Policy EN4 of the MVLP, which seeks to ensure that the amenity of residents occupying properties in the surrounding area is not significantly affected by, amongst other things, lack of outlook or a sense of enclosure.

Living conditions – Barnett Wood Lane

19. There are existing dwellings either side of the entrance to Crouch Industrial Estate from Barnett Wood Road, which are currently subject to noise from traffic travelling on Barnett Wood Lane and from vehicles entering and exiting the estate. The Council's issue concerns the additional noise of traffic visiting the appeal site in the early morning. To address this concern, the appellant has indicated a willingness to be bound by a condition preventing commercial vehicles from accessing the appeal site before 7.30am. Whilst such a condition would not preclude early morning trips by car, it would ensure that noisier commercial vehicles would not disturb nearby residents early in the morning. Given the overall context of the site, such a limitation would be sufficient to protect the living conditions of occupiers.
20. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the living conditions of occupiers of properties near the site entrance on Barnett Wood Lane and would accord with Policy EN12 of the MVLP, which seeks to avoid locating noise-generating uses, such as transport and industrial activities, close to existing noise-sensitive uses. The proposal would satisfy paragraph 135 of the Framework, which requires developments to provide a high standard of amenity for existing users.

On-street parking and the highways network

21. The appeal site currently possesses car parking spaces along the front of the building, which is a common arrangement within the Crouch Industrial Estate. The proposal would retain this arrangement, albeit only four car parking spaces would be marked out, one of which would be a disabled space. There would be space for two lorries to park in front of the unloading area, whilst additional cars would be able to park in front of the building beside the marked spaces. The proposal would not exceed the maximum parking requirement for a storage warehouse set by the MVLP
22. The appellant has undertaken a parking accumulation exercise, based on TRICS (trip rate information computer system) data, which shows that whilst there could be up to 10 visits per hour, customers of self storage generally have a short duration of stay when dropping off and picking up possessions, with the maximum parking accumulation at any one time predicted to be five vehicles. On this basis, the proposal would not give rise to overflow parking.
23. I conclude that the proposal would not have an adverse effect on on-street parking or the highways network and would accord with Policy INF2 of the MVLP, which requires developers of non-residential developments to provide a maximum number of off-street vehicular parking spaces in accordance with local parking standards. The proposal would satisfy paragraph 116 of the Framework, which states that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Other Matters

24. The appeal site is situated within a Strategic Employment Area and as such the proposal is an appropriate use, irrespective of the number of people it would employ. For the same reason, the proposal would not set a precedent for employment development elsewhere. The appellant is not required to demonstrate a need for the proposal or to provide community benefits beyond the storage facility which will be provided.
25. Given the distance between the appeal site and neighbouring dwellings, existing residents would not suffer a material loss of sunlight or daylight. The risk of light pollution can be addressed through the imposition of a suitable condition, as can the risk of disturbance during the construction phase.
26. The site is of low ecological value and no evidence has been presented that the proposal would harm wildlife. Similarly, evidence has not been presented of a drainage problem in the area.
27. The site is already in commercial use, and there is no indication that the proposal would give rise to traffic congestion or a highway safety issue at the site entrance, even if most visits to the site are likely to be by private vehicle and not public transport.
28. There is no suggestion that a telecommunications mast is proposed. There is similarly no indication that the proposal would give rise to criminal activity.
29. Matters related to property values fall outside the scope of this appeal.

Conditions

30. The Framework sets out that conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. I have assessed the suggested list of conditions on this basis.
31. It is necessary to confirm the standard time limit for the development, and to specify the approved drawings, for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of certainty.
32. To protect the amenities of residents and in the interests of highway safety, a construction management plan should be approved and implemented. The plan must be approved before development commences so that it is in place when construction begins.
33. To ensure that any contamination is identified and dealt with, an assessment must be undertaken and its recommendations implemented. A pre-commencement condition is needed so that mitigation can be incorporated in the development.
34. To ensure that the site is satisfactorily drained, a drainage design must be submitted for approval in accordance with the appellant's drainage strategy and implemented, including a verification report. The design must be approved before the commencement of development so it can be fully incorporated in the scheme.
35. To ensure that the building is appropriate to its setting, finished floor levels and external materials should be submitted for approval, notwithstanding the materials shown on the approved plans.
36. In the interests of highway safety, vehicle parking and turning facilities should be laid out in accordance with the approved plans.
37. To comply with Policy EN13 of the MVLP, electric vehicle charging points should be installed, and the development should be zero-carbon ready in accordance with the appellant's energy strategy.
38. To protect the living conditions of nearby residents, external lighting scheme must be installed in accordance with the submitted lighting strategy, and the hours when commercial vehicles can access the site must be controlled. With such restrictions in place, there is no need for a management system for commercial vehicles or an acoustic assessment of outside plant.
39. As the proposal falls within Use Class B8 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, a change of use to Class E would require planning permission, and hence there is no need to limit the use to Class B8 only.

Conclusion

40. For the above reasons, the proposal accords with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

J Heppell

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 numbers 100 Rev P02 (Location Plan), 104 Rev P05 (Proposed Site Plan), 105 Rev P01 (Proposed Ground Floor Plan), 106 Rev P01 (Proposed First Floor Plan), 107 Rev P01 (Proposed Second Floor Plan), 108 Rev P01 (Proposed Third Floor Plan), 109 Rev P01 (Proposed Roof Plan) and 110 Rev P06 (Proposed Elevations).
- 3) No development shall commence until a Construction Transport Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, to include details of the following. Only the approved details shall be implemented during the construction of the development.
 - parking for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors
 - loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - storage of plant and materials
 - programme of works including measures for traffic management
 - provision of boundary hoarding behind any visibility zones
 - HGV deliveries and hours of operation
 - vehicle routing
 - measures to prevent the deposit of materials on the highway
 - before and after construction condition surveys of the highway and a commitment to fund the repair of any damage caused
 - on-site turning for construction vehicles.
- 4) No development shall commence until a detailed scheme of contamination assessment, consisting of site reconnaissance, conceptual model, risk assessment and scheme of intrusive investigation, including a schedule of investigation work to be carried out, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to commencement of development, other than demolition, the scheme of assessment, including consideration of asbestos and chlorinated solvents, shall be carried out at such points and to such depth as the Local Planning Authority may stipulate, and laboratory results shall be provided as numeric values in accordance with the standards of the Government Guidance for Land affected by Contamination. A scheme for decontamination and verification shall then be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the scheme as approved shall be implemented before any part of the development hereby permitted is occupied.
- 5) No development shall commence until details of the final design of a surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The final design should follow the principles set out in Flood Risk Strategy & Outline Drainage Strategy Report Version 2 prepared by Burrows Graham. The design must satisfy the SuDS Hierarchy and be compliant with the Non Statutory Technical Standards for SuDS, National Planning Policy Framework and Ministerial Statement on SuDS. The required drainage details shall include:
 - a. Hydraulic calculations to demonstrate the proposed final solution will

effectively manage the 1 in 30 (+25% allowance for climate change) & 1 in 100 (+40% allowance for climate change) storm events. Associated discharge rates and storage volumes shall be provided using a maximum discharge rate of 2.0l/s

- b. Detailed design drawings for all drainage elements including cross sections and detailed drainage layout plan.
- c. An exceedance flow routing plan demonstrating no increase in surface water flood risk on or off site. The plan must include proposed levels and flow directions.
- d. Details of drainage management responsibilities and maintenance regimes for all drainage elements.
- e. Details of how surface water will be managed during construction including measures to protect on site and downstream systems prior to the final drainage system being operational, including details of how existing watercourses on and adjacent to the site will be protected.

Prior to the first occupation of the development, a verification report must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This must demonstrate that the surface water drainage system has been constructed as per the agreed scheme (or detail any minor variations), confirm that any defects have been rectified, provide the details of any management company, provide an 'As-Built' drainage layout, and state the national grid reference of key drainage elements.

- 6) No development above ground shall take place until the finished floor levels of the building hereby approved have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
- 7) Notwithstanding the external materials shown on the approved plans, no development above ground level shall take place until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 8) The development hereby approved shall not be first opened for trading until space has been laid out within the site, in accordance with the approved Drawing No. 104 Rev P05, for vehicles and bicycles to be parked, for the loading and unloading of number vehicles, and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. Thereafter the parking, loading and unloading, and turning areas shall be retained and maintained for their designated purposes.
- 9) The development hereby approved shall not be first opened for trading until a scheme incorporating the following measures has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter it shall be retained and maintained. At least 50% of all parking spaces shall be provided with a fast-charge Electric Vehicle charging point (current minimum requirements - 7 kw Mode 3 with Type 2 connector - 230v AC 32 Amp single phase dedicated supply) and the remaining parking spaces shall be provided with cable routes for the future provision of charging points.

- 10) The development shall be constructed in accordance with the measures set out in the Energy and Sustainability Strategy prepared by MBA. In the event of Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) technology being proposed for use at the site, full details of the specification and maintenance of the ASHPs shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning prior to occupation, and the development thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 11) All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the External LED Lighting Assessment Report prepared by MBA. A suitably qualified person shall inspect the installation, and prior to occupation a statement of conformity with the design as approved which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any significant non-conformities in the scheme as installed shall be identified and, if necessary, any additional work shall be completed to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority within three months of occupation.
- 12) Light goods and all other commercial vehicles shall only be permitted to access the site between the hours of 07:00 to 22:00 hours Monday to Saturday and 08:30 to 16:00 hours on Sundays and Bank or Public Holidays.

End of schedule