



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 March 2026

by Alison Fish BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 April 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/25/3363513

Riplington Barn, Bereleigh Estate, East Meon, Petersfield GU32 1HU

- 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 Jack and Emily Tyrwhitt-Drake against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/23/02667/FUL.
 - The development proposed is conversion and re-use of redundant agricultural building as a dwelling, hard and soft landscaping, and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs Jack and Emily Tyrwhitt-Drake against South Downs National Park Authority.

Preliminary Matters

3. It was intended that the site visit would be undertaken on an access required basis, but no one was at the site when I attended. However, the site and building could clearly be seen from the road. I am satisfied that I can determine this appeal based upon the unaccompanied site visit which was undertaken.
4. The Authority's decision notice sets out 3 reasons for refusal. However, the third reason refers solely to the plans on which the decision was based. It is not therefore a reason for refusal and I have proceeded on this basis.

Main Issues

5. Therefore, the main issues are:
 - whether the appeal building, the proposed conversion scheme and its location comply with policies in the development plan for the conversion of existing buildings to new uses; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including whether the proposal would conserve and enhance the landscape, natural beauty and tranquillity of the South Downs National Park (NP).

Reasons

Appropriateness of location, building and proposed scheme

6. Policy SD41 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-33, adopted July 2019 (LP) permits the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings, outside defined settlement boundaries to an alternative use, subject to a number of criteria.
7. Criteria a) of Part 1 of the policy permits an alternative use where the site is sufficiently well-related to existing infrastructure, amenities and services. However, neither the policy nor the explanatory text explains what would comprise a sufficiently well-related site, other than that those in isolated locations are generally not suitable. Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) also uses the term 'isolated' which is understood to be a dwelling which is physically separate or remote from a settlement.
8. The appeal site lies equidistant between the settlements of East and West Meon. Both contain a limited number of services and facilities and the appeal site is over 2.5km from either of them. Access to either settlement would be via unlit rural roads with no footway. It would be unattractive to pedestrians and cyclists resulting in an over reliance on the private car. Furthermore, the appeal site consists of a single building which is approximately 300 metres away from the nearest cluster of buildings. I therefore find it to be isolated and not sufficiently well-related to existing infrastructure, amenities and services as required by the first criteria. I return to this matter again later.
9. Criteria c) of Part 1 of Policy SD41 of the LP also requires that the building is worthy of conversion without the need for substantial reconstruction. The modern steel-framed building, with blockwork walls and corrugated sheeting on 3 of its 4 elevations is of no vernacular, architectural or historic interest. However, I am not persuaded that a building needs to be of historic interest to be worthy of conversion. I say this as criteria e) of Policy SD41, and paragraph 7.203 of the LP do not rule out the use of non-traditional farm buildings for new uses. I am satisfied that the building is worthy of conversion.
10. The structural condition report identifies that the steel frame is in good condition. The appellant has drawn my attention to a planning application at Whitedale Farm¹ where the details before me indicate that on that occasion, the Authority accepted that a modern open-fronted barn of steel construction with a corrugated roof was capable of conversion. Therefore, there is no substantive evidence before me that the building the subject of this appeal, is not capable of conversion.
11. That said, the scheme before me differs from that at Whitedale Farm as it involves a significant amount of alteration to the existing structure and form of the building. Paragraph 7.204 of the LP is clear that conversion should be achieved through minimal changes and retention of the existing structure.
12. The proposals involve removing the end bay of the building and 3 bays within the centre of the catslide roof on the northwest elevation. The size and shape of the

¹ LPA Ref: SDNP/21/03521/FUL Proposed conversion of redundant and disused agricultural building into residential dwelling; associated curtilage and landscaping at Whitedale Farm, East Street, Hambledon PO7 4RZ

resulting building would be significantly altered from that which exists at present and this would conflict with the requirement of the policy.

13. Taken together I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the requirements of Policy SD41 of the LP which permits the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to new uses subject to a number of criteria including that the site is sufficiently well related to existing infrastructure, amenities and services and that its conversion can take place without the need for substantial reconstruction or significant extension.

Character and appearance

14. The appeal site is located within the NP. In determining this appeal, I must have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the NP².
15. The appeal site is located within the Landscape Character Area 4A: Meon Valley. The key characteristic relevant to the proposal before me is that it is a peaceful and tranquil landscape.
16. The existing building is most visible at the point of access from the road to the east of the building. From this location, the proposal would be highly visible. Some of the existing hardstanding area around the building would be removed and replaced with a species rich lawn, and gaps in the hedgerow adjacent to the lane could be filled with mixed native hedgerow planting. Whilst the appearance of the building would be noticeably changed through its conversion to a dwelling, it would have no greater impact on the overall landscape character and appearance from the road.
17. The remaining boundaries of the site are enclosed by established planting, and the barn is set into the slope of the land. This means that although the site is visible from West Meon Road, this is at some distance.
18. Whilst the appearance, form and size of the building would be altered, I am not persuaded that this would make the building any more visible in the landscape than at present, due to its limited visibility from public vantage points. A condition could secure glazing which prevents light spill and glare. Equally, the provision of a single dwelling would not have a perceptible effect on the peace and tranquillity of the area.
19. There would be increased domestication of the immediate site. However, additional hedge and tree planting to the boundaries would mitigate any residual effects on the wider landscape. Controls over future domestic type buildings and structures on the site could be secured by a condition to remove permitted development rights.
20. I therefore conclude that the proposal would conserve the distinctive landscape character and appearance of the area. No conflict would arise with Policies SD4 and SD5 of the LP and Policy EM5 of the East Meon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2032 which seek to conserve landscape character in the NP through sensitive and high-quality design and protect valued views.

² The duty set out in Section 11A (2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

Other considerations

21. Paragraph 84 of the Framework permits isolated homes where, amongst other things, it would re-use redundant and disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting. I have found that the appeal site is isolated and the proposal would result in the reuse of a redundant building. However, and notwithstanding my conclusions regarding the neutral impact on the character and appearance of the area, I am not persuaded that the domestication of the site through the provision of a formalised parking area and residential garden could be said to enhance the setting of this simple yet functional former agricultural building. I therefore attach limited weight to Paragraph 84 of the Framework in my consideration of this appeal.
22. I have attached some weight to the need to significantly boost the supply of homes and acknowledge that small sites can make an important contribution to this. Whilst one new home provided through sustainable construction methods would be a benefit, collectively I give these benefits only modest weight particularly as there is no evidence before me that the Authority are failing to deliver on housing.

Other Matters

23. The appeal site is located 300m to the north of Riplington Farm, a Grade II listed building. I have therefore had regard to the duty in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However, the scale and location of the proposed development, including intervening topography and planting would result in a neutral effect on the setting of the listed building.
24. Had I been minded to allow the appeal, I would have needed to consider the effect of the proposal on the qualifying features of the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA). I would also have needed to consider whether the submitted Unilateral Undertaking would sufficiently mitigate any likely significant effects. However, as the appeal is to be dismissed, I need not address this.
25. Although not a reason for refusal, the officers report states that it has not been successfully demonstrated that the proposal would not be suitable for visitor accommodation, in line with the cascade set out in criteria g) of Part 1 of Policy SD41 of the LP. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, it is not necessary for me to examine this further.

Conclusion

26. Whilst I have found that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the area, including the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the NP, the proposal would not accord with the Authority's policy on the reuse of existing buildings in the open countryside. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework that outweigh this conflict. Consequently, with reference to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the appeal is dismissed.

Alison Fish

INSPECTOR