



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 April 2026

by **A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 April 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/X2220/W/25/3376014

The Barn, Coombe Lane, Woodnesborough, Kent CT13 0PW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Andrews & Ms Rowland against the decision of Dover District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00713.
 - The development proposed is construction of a single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle, and the second 'technical details consent' stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent technical details consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the appeal site (the site) is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development.

Reasons

5. The site is residential garden land associated with a dwelling called The Barn. It is some 350m beyond the settlement boundary for Ash. For the purposes of the appeal, Policy SP4 of the Dover District Local Plan (2024) (the Local Plan) supports residential development within or adjoining the boundary.
6. The appellant directs my attention to the judgment in *Corbett*¹, that the term "immediately adjoining" must be interpreted according to the facts of each case and need not necessarily mean contiguous or coterminous.

¹ Corbett v Cornwall Council [2022] EWCA Civ 1069.

7. I do not see Policy SP4 as being at odds with *Corbett*; The supporting text to the policy states that the built form of a proposed development must be physically and visually related to the existing built form of the settlement it would adjoin, and that this can include schemes which would not immediately adjoin boundaries but would have a very close connection to the built form of the settlement.
8. Open fields lay between the site and the Ash boundary. The area immediately around the site is characterised by a dispersed pattern of development, in which a small number of buildings are scattered across otherwise open land and accessed by narrow, unlit country lanes. Though some of these buildings face onto Coombe Lane, they do so at such a variety of angles and distances as to display little uniformity. The character of this area is quintessentially rural, and its layout appears to have evolved organically.
9. In contrast, the southeasternmost limb of Ash, comprised of residential development on New Street, Orchard View, and Saunders Lane displays a pattern and density of development redolent of suburban norms; Dwellings are on coherent building lines and face onto roads wide enough for two-way passing. There are street lighting and pavements. Notwithstanding its historic element, Ash has a planned, formal feel so distinct from the environment around the appeal site that I find little visual connection between the two.
10. Turning to the fields that separate the site from Ash; I have little reason to think that nearby settlements, including Ash, contain open fields within their boundaries. Rather, it is a general characteristic of the wider area that arable fields demarcate and separate local settlements. The Ash mapped boundary reflects the actual edge of its suburban built form; Where it stops, the fields begin. They provide a clear visual and physical separation between the boundary and the site.
11. I do not doubt there is a social and functional connection between the site and Ash, in that occupants of the former would likely depend upon the services and facilities in the latter. I also recognise that the two are connected by established roads and public rights of way, and that the distance from the site to the Ash Boundary is relatively modest. I appreciate that the appellants play an active role in Ash.
12. However, I see nothing unusual in occupiers of an outlying hamlet depending socially and practically upon the nearest settlement. Significantly insofar as these matters pertain to adjacency, I also see little to suggest that the dependency is reciprocal.
13. Overall, the distinction between the site and the settlement is so clearly defined that proximity and social connections do not equate to adjacency in this instance. Having considered *Corbett*, I find that the site does not adjoin the settlement boundary, and the proposal therefore does not have the support of Policy SP4.
14. That support also depends, in any event, upon the proposed development being in accordance with all other relevant policies in the Local Plan, as at criterion (k) of Policy SP4. The Council contends that the proposed development would create reliance on the private motor car, in conflict with Policy TI1.
15. Whilst the Ash boundary is some 350m from the site, facilities within the settlement required for day-to-day living are further still; The village centre is around a mile away. The routes there from the site rely on Coombe Lane and/or parts of New

Street which are outside of the boundary. None of these have lighting or pavements. Coombe lane is very narrow in the main, and provides few safe places for pedestrians to wait as motor vehicles pass. A public right of way exists over part of one route, but it is unmade, unlit, and allows only partial avoidance of the road network in any event.

16. As such, whilst the distance from the site to the centre of Ash is one that some people would consider walking or cycling, the conditions along the routes would discourage most people from doing either. This would particularly be the case in poor weather, after dark, if accompanied by children, or if carrying heavy shopping. I do not doubt that the appellants are content to walk and cycle to Ash from The Barn, but the proposed dwelling may be occupied by those with less confidence in that regard. I form my view based on what local conditions make most likely, and that is car dependence.
17. I am informed that local bus services connect Ash to larger conurbations. Whilst the appellant has not identified the location of the nearest bus stops to the site, the Council tells me they are on Marshborough Road and New Street. I saw nothing thereabouts to suggest local bus stops offer shelter from the elements, or may be accessed on foot without walking along busy, unlit roads and the same narrow lanes described above. Much the same appears true of the nearest school bus collection points. I have, in any event, been provided with little evidence that bus services are so regular and comprehensive as to offer a viable alternative to the private car.
18. The area around the site lacks the recognisable traits of a settlement or village. As such, even if the appeal proposal resulted in support for services in Ash, it is not evident that the proposal has the support of paragraph 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
19. Even if the site is not isolated, it would result in car dependency. The Framework describes the purpose of the planning system as being “to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”, an aim containing an environmental objective of mitigating and adapting to climate change. This includes moving to a low carbon economy achieved, in part, by the promotion of walking, cycling and public transport. In all, the proposal conflicts with the provisions of the Framework.
20. My attention has been drawn to a previous permission for a single dwelling at Saunders Lane². That location is significantly different to the appeal site, in that it is far closer to the Ash boundary, on a street laid out in the suburban form I have found typical of Ash. Moreover, it is alongside an allocated housing site with permission for some 76 dwellings. When complete, this will physically connect the Saunders Lane site to Ash. Given the above, I attach minimal weight to the permission in question.
21. The proposal would yield a net gain of one new house towards the Government’s aim of significantly boosting supply. There would be temporary economic benefits associated with the construction phase and, thereafter, ongoing local economic and potentially social benefits relating to the occupation of the site, in which local facilities may benefit from increased demand and participation. Nevertheless, given the relatively modest scale of the proposal and the small number of new

² Application Ref DOV/22/00907.

residents brought about, these benefits would be minor and not outweigh the conflict with policy described above.

22. Overall, occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be highly likely to depend on the private car for day-to-day activities. This results in conflict with Local Plan Policy TI1, where it seeks to promote sustainable methods of transport, and further conflict with Policy SP4, as at criterion (k). For these reasons, the proposal would not be in a suitable location having regard to the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.
24. The appeal is dismissed.

A Knight

INSPECTOR