



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 March 2026

by **N Bowden BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 April 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/W/25/3376432

Barn North of Shafford Farm, Redbourn Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 6PY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant approval required under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Maydencroft against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/25/0743.
 - The development proposed is Prior Approval - Change of use of building on an agricultural unit to residential (Class C3).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for Prior Approval - Change of use of building on an agricultural unit to residential (Class C3) at Barn North of Shafford Farm, St Albans AL3 6PY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/25/0743, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions set out at Part Q.2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO¹).

Preliminary and Procedural Matters

2. I have used the description of development given by the Council in its decision notice, as the details given on the application form included matters which are not acts of development.
3. The appellant has indicated that they wish to have the proposal considered under the former provisions of the GPDO. This is allowed for under the transitional arrangements set out in Article 10 of the amending Order, which permit prior approval applications to be made in respect of the former Class Q up until the end of 20 May 2025. The application was submitted on this date and therefore the proposal has been assessed in relation to these former provisions.
4. The appellant has further indicated that the proposal is to be assessed solely under Class Q(a) of the GPDO and this is expressly allowed for within the wording of the GPDO. In this context, a further application considering those matters to be agreed under Part Q.2 would be required.
5. Additional plans were provided with the appeal. The Procedural Guide: Planning appeals – England² indicates at section 16 that the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme and there are no provisions within the Rules for

¹ As it existed prior to the amendments that came into force on the 21 May 2024 (SI 2024 No. 579). For the avoidance of doubt, reference to “the GPDO” in this decision relates to the version of that Order which existed prior to the amendments which came into force on 21 May 2024.

² For appeals relating to applications dated on or before 31 March 2026.

amendments to be submitted. However, in the context of this appeal, these plans can only be taken as illustrative and therefore I have had regard to them, but only insofar as I am able to do so.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the proposed development is “permitted development” under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q(a) of the GPDO and, if so, whether or not it would require prior approval in respect of the conditions in paragraph Q.2.

Reasons

7. The Council objected to the proposal under Class Q.1 (h) and (i) and Class Q.2(1)(e), (f), (g) and Q.2(2) of Class Q Part 3 to Schedule 2 of the GPDO.
8. Class Q.1 (h) of the GPDO sets out that development is not permitted if “the development would result in external dimensions of the building extending beyond the external dimensions of the existing building at any given point”. Whilst details of the resultant building were not provided with the application material, it remains feasible for the building to be capable of meeting this criterion. Moreover, the applicant provided – in their written description – no indication that any building or other operations beyond the existing external dimensions were sought.
9. In addition, although the additional plans provided with the appeal can only be treated as illustrative and are not determinative in and of themselves, they do indicate that such works would be possible within the confines of the existing external dimensions. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal can comply with the requirements of Class Q.1 (h).
10. I have had regard to the Council’s comments – particularly insofar as the existing building is largely an open sided structure and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains that the agricultural building is capable of functioning as a dwelling. However, the PPG also advises that the right permits building operations which are reasonably necessary to convert the building, which may include those which would affect the external appearance of the building and would otherwise require planning permission. Although such works would inevitably be quite substantial in this instance, due to the open sided nature of the building, it would not exceed that described in the PPG or go beyond the limits set out in the GPDO.
11. Class Q.1 (i) relates to development under Class Q(b). Namely where the development proposed includes extension of the building. No extensions to the building have been proposed and therefore the tests in relation to this Class do not fall to be considered.
12. Turning to the assessment under Class Q.2; Class Q.2(2) sets out that “where the development proposed is development under Class Q(a) only, development is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development, the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the items referred to in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) to (e) and (g), and the provisions of paragraph W (prior approval) of this Part apply in relation to that application.”
13. As already referred to above, it has already been set out that the application was in relation to Class Q(a) only. A further application would be required to consider these matters under Class Q.2 and, in allowing the appeal, I have set this out as a

condition of this approval. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to go on to consider the further implications of this as this will have to be the subject of a separate application. The Council would then have the opportunity to consider these matters, including those explained in its Statement and suggested schedule of conditions.

14. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal, as put to me here, complies with the relevant provisions of the GPDO and that in respect of Class Q(a) only, prior approval would not be required.

Other Matters

15. In reaching my conclusions here I have had regard to the comments of interested parties. As the nature of this appeal is quite tightly confined to the assessment of the proposal against the provisions of the GPDO, I am unable to consider many of those comments relating to the planning merits of the proposal. I have considered the representations made regarding the use of the building and its potentially unauthorised uses in the past and access to the site. However, these matters are not in dispute by the main parties. Moreover, I have no evidence to indicate that any previous commercial uses of the site were ever established as having become lawful. The appeal building, when last in lawful use, was used as part of an established agricultural unit.
16. The site is not on Article 2(3) land – namely as being within a National Landscape or conservation area. In relation to the latter, whilst I note the site is adjacent to the Shafford Mill Conservation Area, it is not within it.
17. Civil matters relating to rights of access to the land and land ownership are not within my remit to consider here.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, the proposed change of use to a dwellinghouse would be development that meets the specific requirements of Class Q(a) of the GPDO. Therefore, the appeal is allowed.

N Bowden

INSPECTOR