



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2026

by Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 July 2026

Appeal Ref: 6007274

Gaydon, Kennel Lane, West Grinstead, WEST SUSSEX, RH13 8LX

- 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 Francis against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/26/0029.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of stables to dwelling, removal of smaller stable block and sand school. Associated landscape works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are: -
 - a) Whether the site is suitable for the proposed development, having regard to the spatial strategy of the development plan and accessibility; and
 - b) The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of future adjoining occupiers.

Reasons

Location

3. Policies 2 and 4 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (the HDPF) sets out the growth strategy for the District focusing development in the main settlements or as expansions of those settlements. The application site is located approximately 2 miles from Cowfold and is outside of and well beyond any built-up settlement boundary. The site is therefore located within the countryside in policy terms.
4. In tandem with this approach, Policy 26 of the HDPF only permits development in the countryside where such a location is essential, and the proposal meets one of four criteria. These are that it either supports the needs of agriculture or forestry; enables the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; provides for quiet informal recreation use; or enables the sustainable development of rural areas. The proposed development does not meet any of the criteria and, therefore, does not comply with Policy 26 of the HDPF.
5. Paragraph 84(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) supports development that would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting. The appellants contend that the Council has taken

an unduly narrow view of whether the building is redundant or disused. However, whilst the building may no longer be utilised for its original equestrian purpose it was observed by the local planning authority at their site visit to being used for storage and, as such, had a functional use. On this basis I would agree with the local planning authority that the building would not be considered to be redundant or disused.

6. The surrounding area is characterised by dispersed residential properties and equestrian uses. The proposed development is modest in scale. The development would not represent urban sprawl or encroachment into the wider open countryside. Whilst these are attributes of the proposed scheme when taken on their own merits, the site is however located within the countryside beyond any settlement boundary and, for this reason, does not comply with development plan policy.
7. The opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas. As noted above, the site is approximately 2 miles from Cowfold and is located on a single track country lane and is remote from walking routes and public transport links within settlements further afield. Occupants of the proposed dwelling would be heavily reliant on private vehicles to access day-to-day services and facilities.
8. For these reasons, I conclude that the site would not be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the spatial strategy of the development plan and accessibility. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies 1, 2, 4 and 26 of the HDPF and the provisions of the Framework.
9. I have been referred to an appeal decision at Marlpost Meadows, Southwater (Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/22/3303603). That proposal related to a single dwelling house granted permission outside of the built-up area boundary. From the information provided it appears that Marlpost Meadows is located significantly closer to the built-up area than that of the proposed dwelling that is before me. In that case the Inspector considered that development to have accessibility via a range of transport modes whilst acknowledging that the proposal conflicted with the policies contained within the HDPF. In contrast, the appeal site before me is located a significant distance from the nearest settlement and can only reasonably be accessed via private vehicle. Given the difference in circumstances with regard to accessibility, the proposal before me can and should be considered on its own individual merits.

Living conditions

10. The appeal site is sited immediately adjacent to the rear garden of Gaydon. The windows in the rear elevation of the new dwelling would serve two bedrooms and a bathroom. Bedrooms are habitable living spaces and, given the extremely small size of the proposed dwelling, these are rooms in which the occupiers would be likely to spend a reasonable amount of their time.
11. Gaydon is a two-storey dwelling with outlook from the property from both ground and first floor levels toward the proposed dwelling. Given the limited separation between respective dwellings, overlooking of the new dwelling from Gaydon would take place that would lead to the creation of a poor-quality living environment for the future occupiers of the proposed dwelling.

12. Furthermore, the presence of a large two-storey dwelling in such close proximity to the proposed dwelling would create an oppressive environment for the future occupiers as it would loom over the proposed single-storey dwelling and generate a sense of a dominant building overbearing the living environment of the occupiers.
13. The existing dwelling already overlooks parts of its wider grounds, including the area where the proposed converted dwelling is located. The proposal does not introduce a new relationship between respective. Nonetheless, the proposal is for a new type of use of the existing stable building as a dwelling. This gives rise to planning considerations relating to living conditions that are relevant and pertinent to the proposal. The future occupiers of this new dwelling should reasonably expect to enjoy an acceptable living environment as part of their residential lives. There would be harm as a result of overlooking from, and the overbearing impacts of, the existing adjacent dwelling.
14. It is intended to plant two native trees and grow a hedge around the grounds of the proposed dwelling. Nonetheless, such landscaping could be removed or die therefore it cannot be relied upon to screen the development. As such, little weight can be attributed to this landscaping to make an unacceptable development acceptable. This offers little weight in support of the proposal.
15. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the living conditions of future adjoining occupiers. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF and the provisions of the Framework. These policies seek, amongst other matters, development to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land through overlooking or noise, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development.

Planning Balance

16. The Council advises that it cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. The most recent Annual Monitoring Report 2024/2025 indicates there to be a 1.7-year housing land supply. Policies relating to the spatial distribution of residential development are out of date. As there is not a 5-year supply of deliverable sites in place, the provisions of paragraph 11d)ii of the Framework should be applied.
17. The proposal would be acceptable in design terms when taken on its own merits. The removal of the sand school and associated equestrian paraphernalia would reduce visual clutter within the locality. The proposal is also acceptable in other technical respects, such as, in highway and ecology terms, amongst others, subject to appropriately worded planning conditions. Nonetheless, the proposal would be required to be acceptable in respect of these individual planning considerations taken on their own merits in order for planning permission to be forthcoming. As such, these matters do not offer benefits in favour of the proposed scheme. Rather they hold neutral weight.
18. The adverse impacts arising from the proposal relate to the unsatisfactory location of the development, including the need for private travel, and the harm to the living conditions of the future adjoining occupiers. The proposal would dilute the District's overall growth strategy for the pattern of residential development and would also be contrary to the expectations of the Framework.

19. On the other hand, the Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of homes and the cumulative impact of developing small sites can help meet supply. Even if the deficit in housing land supply is acute, one dwelling would only make a modest difference to the overall supply of housing and the support an extra household would provide to the social and local economy would be minimal. The harm that I have identified relating to the unsatisfactory location of the development and unsustainable location in regard of the reliance of private vehicle to access services and facilities, as well as the harm that would occur to the living conditions of future occupiers, is not outweighed by the contribution to housing land supply or those limited environmental, social and economic benefits associated with the proposal.
20. Consequently, the adverse impact of the site's location, accessibility and on the living conditions of future occupiers would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

21. Having regard to the above findings, the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies

INSPECTOR