Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2026

by E Catcheside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 November 2026

Appeal Ref: 6013244
1 Stablehouse Bungalows, Leechpond Hill, Lower Beeding, West Sussex RH13 6NP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission
- The appeal is made by Mr Marcus Beckett against Horsham District Council.
- The application Ref is DC/26/0483.
- The development proposed is conversion and extension of existing detached residential garage and storage building to self contained residential dwellinghouse.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal was submitted on the basis of the failure of the Council to determine the planning application within the prescribed period. The Council has stated that, had it determined the application, it would have refused planning permission for the development. The main issues are based on the evidence before me, including the putative reasons for refusal put forward by the Council.

3. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 17 August 2026. The parties were invited to comment on the revised Framework, and I have taken account of the comments received.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:

   - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and
   - whether the proposed development should be approved outside of a settlement, having regard to local and national policies, and accessibility to services and facilities by sustainable travel modes.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The extension of the existing building would add considerable bulk and mass to the rear of the structure, and therefore the development would occupy a much larger proportion of its plot than the adjacent bungalows and its garden area would be much smaller. However, as a detached structure with dormer windows, the

existing garage already lacks consistency with the character and design of the adjacent bungalows, and I have not been directed to evidence that the outdoor amenity space would fail to meet the needs of future occupiers due to its size. Consequently, whilst the development would not reflect the established form and plot layout of the other dwellings here, it would not lead to additional harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surroundings by way of its design.

6. Moreover, whilst the proposed conversion would lead to the permanent subdivision of land that is currently associated with 1 Stablehouse Bungalows, I saw that the garage is already segregated from No 1 by fencing, and the access and parking arrangements shown on the plans are already present. There is nothing in the evidence to indicate that the fencing and access are not well-established features, and so I have no reason to conclude they would not endure should the appeal fail. Consequently, there would be no harmful change to the site's character through the conversion of the existing building to a residence.

7. Overall, the proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, there would be no conflict with Policies 25, 32, and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (November 2015) (HDPF) and Policy 12 of the Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 (NP), which together seek to ensure development is of a high-quality design that protects the character of the area and is in keeping with local vernacular and materials.

Whether the development should be approved outside of a settlement

8. Lower Beeding is identified in Policy 3 of the HDPF as a smaller village, with limited services and facilities. I have not been directed to a defined settlement boundary for the village. However, from my observations, its built-up area comprises the reasonably close-knit development and the services and facilities that lie several hundred metres north of the appeal site, centred around the junction between Leechpond Hill and the B2115 road. There is no dispute between the parties that the site lies outside of the settlement.

9. Taken together, Policies 2, 3, 4, and 26 of the HDPF seek to direct development towards settlements with the greatest range of services and facilities, whilst taking a more restrictive approach to development outside of the built-up area boundaries (BUAB) of settlements unless certain circumstances apply, which are not advanced in this case. It follows that the proposal does not carry support from these development plan policies.

10. Policy 1 of the HDPF requires developments to be considered in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the Framework, albeit that the national decision-making approach to considering sustainable development was revised in the latest published version of the Framework.

11. Policy S5 of the Framework sets out the circumstances where development outside settlements should be approved. The Council has stated that it is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites; and that its latest Housing Delivery Test score falls below 75%. The proposal would therefore address an evidenced unmet need in line with Policy S5(1)(j) of the Framework.

12. There is a footpath between the site and Lower Beeding, and so the village could be reached on foot or by bicycle with reasonable care. However, given the limited facilities within the village, future occupants would need to travel further afield to

other settlements to meet their day-to-day needs. Mannings Heath and Cowfold, whilst reasonably close for access by keen and confident cyclists, are also small villages with limited services. However, both parties refer to a nearby bus service to Horsham, from where future occupiers would be able to access a wide range of amenities and onward travel services. Consequently, there would be opportunities for future occupiers to meet their needs through utilising sustainable travel modes.

13. However, the appeal site is separated from Lower Beeding by large areas of undeveloped land and there is no visual connectivity between the site and the built-up edge of the village. Therefore, it cannot be said that the site is physically well-related to the settlement, and it follows that the proposal does not comprise a form of development that is described in Policy S5(1)(j) of the Framework.

14. Because the proposal would comprise the reuse and extension of an existing building of permanent and substantial construction, it would meet one requirement of Policy S5(1)(c) of the Framework. It follows that there is potential for the conversion and extension of the building, provided the proposal would not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the existing building.

15. The design of the new dwelling has been informed by the nationally described space standards for a two-bedroom home. However, the proposal would nonetheless lead to a significant increase in the footprint, depth and volume of the existing building; and there would also be an increase in its height. Together, these factors would result in a building that would be substantially greater in its massing and overall scale than the existing garage. This leads me to conclude that the proposed extension would result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the existing building. Therefore, the proposal would not comprise a form of development that is described in Policy S5(1)(c) of the Framework.

16. Overall, whilst the site's location would support sustainable patterns of movement in accordance with Policy TR3 of the Framework, there is no clear policy support at either a local or national level for approving the development proposed on this site which lies outside of a settlement.

Other Matter

17. It is advanced that, as a self-build dwelling, the site would be exempt from the statutory provisions for biodiversity net gain. I have not considered this matter further as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons.

Planning Balance

18. Policy S5(4) of the Framework states that development proposals which do not fall within one of the categories set out in Policy S5 should only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

19. No harm would arise through the site's location relative to access to sustainable modes of transport or the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. However, the proposal does not carry support from the development plan policies in respect of the site's location outside of the BUAB of a settlement. In the absence of clear policies that favour the proposal, it does not accord with the development plan.

20. Moreover, the proposal would not comprise a form of development that should be approved in line with Policy S5(1) of the Framework. The Framework is a material

consideration of critical importance, and the conflict with national policy weighs heavily against the proposal.

21. The development would contribute towards housing needs in an area where there is a known shortfall; and if it was built and occupied as a self-build home, it would also contribute towards meeting the demand for self-build homes. Policy HO7 of the Framework says that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of providing homes which contribute towards meeting the evidenced accommodation needs of the community. That said, as a single dwelling proposal, the contribution made by the appeal scheme would be small.

22. Further benefits would arise through the generation of temporary construction jobs, and an additional household in the area would lead to increased spending on local services which would support the vitality of rural communities.

23. Notwithstanding the substantial weight afforded to housing delivery, the benefits in this case do not substantially outweigh the adverse effects associated with the site's location outside of a settlement. It follows that the exceptional circumstances referred to in Policy S5(4) of the Framework are not present.

Conclusion

24. The proposal would not accord with the development plan, and the material considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

E Catcheside
INSPECTOR