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Your Ref: PL/2023/10502
Our Ref: APP/Y3940/W/24/3352933

03 June 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Appeal by Mr Julian Brunt
Site Address: Land to the West of Alderton Lane , Alderton Lane, Grittleton, Wiltshire , SN14 6AN

I enclose a copy of our Inspector's decision on the above appeal(s).

If you have queries or feedback about the decision or the way we handled the appeal(s), you should submit them using our "Feedback" webpage at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate/about/complaints-procedure.

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The Planning Inspectorate cannot change or revoke the outcome in the attached decision. If you want to alter the outcome you should consider obtaining legal advice as only the High Court can quash this decision.

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to provide us with valuable feedback.

Yours sincerely,

Nadia Hussain
Nadia Hussain

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Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2025

by Bhupinder Thandi BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/24/3352933
Land west of Stonewold House, Alderton Lane, Grittleton SN14 6AN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Julian Brunt against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application Ref is PL/2023/10502.
- The development proposed is erection of two dwellinghouses.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application has been submitted in outline with landscaping reserved for future consideration. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:

   - Whether the site is an appropriate location for new housing having regard to local planning policies; and
   - The effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area including the Cotswolds National Landscape (NL).

Reasons

Appropriate location

4. Core Policy 1 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) (WCS) classifies Grittleton as a small village with no defined settlement boundary. The policy states that some very modest development may be appropriate at Small Villages, to respond to local needs and to contribute to the vitality of rural communities. Any development at Small Villages will be carefully managed by Core Policy 2 and other relevant policies of the plan.

5. WCS Core Policy 2 outlines the delivery strategy and states that at Small Villages development will be limited to infill within the existing built area providing they seek to meet the housing needs of the settlement and subject to a number of design criteria. The policy states that proposals outside of the limits of development are not supported unless permitted by other policies in the WCS.

6. The appeal site is formed of a broadly rectangular field that sits to the north of an area of woodland and to the south of linear residential development. A number of dwellings are also located opposite the site.

7. Grittleton has a compact linear layout extending along The Street with Manor Farm viewed as a visual and physical bookend to the village. When on the ground as one turns the corner on to Alderton Lane from The Street the presence of the verdant woodland, the open and undeveloped nature of the appeal site and vegetated open frontages draw the eye, rather than built form, giving the impression of being in the countryside rather than in a village. This rural character is very apparent looking northwards as more extensive views of the surrounding open countryside and big skies become apparent.

8. When approaching Grittleton from the north Alderton Lane has the appearance of a narrow country lane with high sided hedges and despite dwellings revealing themselves they appear as a sporadic form of development rather than being understood as forming part of the village. In addition, the site is not a gap within an otherwise built-up frontage, nor does it have the characteristics of an obvious gap site but is understood as forming part of the wider rural landscape.

9. Consequently, in my judgement, the site does not form part of the existing built area of the village but rather is located within open countryside. In other words, it is not at a Small Village. As I have found that the proposal would be located within open countryside rather than within the existing built area it is not necessary for me to consider the design criteria set out at WCS Core Policy 2 i); ii) and iii).

10. Grittleton has some services including churches, a village hall, public house and sports facilities which are reasonably close to the site and accessible from existing footpaths. That said, future occupiers would be reliant upon principal settlements and market towns for the weekly shop, larger order goods, health, employment, higher education and entertainment. Future residents would likely rely on private vehicles to access these services and facilities.

11. Whilst there is a bus stop close by I have not been provided with any substantive information on the timings and frequency of the services and therefore, based on the evidence before me, I am not satisfied that the bus services would represent a convenient alternative transport option.

12. In these circumstances the use of private motor vehicles is the only practical means for future residents to access the day-to-day services they require. This combination of factors demonstrates that the site is not a location where a new dwelling would be considered acceptable having regard to the spatial strategy and accessibility to services and facilities.

13. The proposal is therefore contrary to WCS Core Policies 1, 2, 10, 60 and 61 and Saved Policy H4 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011) which, amongst other things, seek to direct new development to appropriate locations and encourage the use of sustainable transport options.

Character and appearance including effects upon the Cotswolds NL

14. The statutory purpose of a national landscape is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The special qualities of a national landscape are those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive, and which are

considered valuable. The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan (CNLMP) sets out that the Cotswolds is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, geological, geomorphological and ecological features. Its special qualities include large open, elevated predominantly farmed landscapes with commons, big skies and long-distance views; distinctive dry-stone walls; tranquillity and distinctive settlements developed in the Cotswolds vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity.

15. The field does not in itself appear to be unique or distinctive nonetheless its verdant and undeveloped nature contributes to the natural beauty of the Cotswold NL and allows appreciation of big skies and views over the surrounding agrarian landscape. Development of the site through the loss of a green field and the introduction of built form, hard surfacing and associated infrastructure would result in urbanisation, encroachment into the countryside and a loss of visual openness diminishing the rural character of the area.

16. The proposed development would be most evident in localised views from Alderton Lane and in fleeting views from road C72 located to the south. When traveling along road C72 views of the dwellings proposed would be glimpsed, filtered by intervening vegetation and would not be highly discernible, particularly to the casual observer. The experience for local residents on Alderton Lane would evidently change through the introduction of new built form, however, it would be seen in the context of existing dwellings and as a continuation of the linear pattern of development to the north.

17. The National Landscape designation does not preclude development and there would be positive factors including the alignment of properties being similar to the dwellings to the north, a sympathetic appearance reflecting the Cotswolds vernacular and retention of the dry stone wall. However, albeit on a small field atypical of the wider landscape there would be an adverse effect through the development of a green field for residential development and the introduction of built form, hard surfacing and associated infrastructure.

18. Given the overall size of the Cotswolds NL and the particular characteristics of the site its loss to development would not be significant in the context of the key qualities and landscape features of the Cotswolds NL as a whole. That said, paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

19. Drawing all these matters together I find that, on balance, the proposed development would result in an adverse, albeit minor, impact upon the character and appearance of the area including the scenic beauty of the Cotswolds NL. For these reasons, it would be contrary to WCS Policies CP51 (ii), (iii) and (ix) and CP57 (i) (iii) and (vi) and Policies CE1 and CE3 of the CNLMP which, amongst other things, require developments to conserve and where possible enhance the locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape setting and features, the transition between man-made and natural landscapes and have regard to the special qualities of and scenic beauty of National Landscapes.

Planning Balance

20. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

21. The Framework, at paragraph 78, states that local planning authorities should identify and update a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing, including an appropriate buffer. The Council accepts that they cannot demonstrate a deliverable five-year supply of housing land advising that the supply is in the region of 2.03 years.

22. Paragraph 11 d) states where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless one of two scenarios apply.

23. Firstly paragraph 11 d) i states that permission should not be granted when the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance, as set out in Footnote 7, provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. National Landscapes are one such protected area.

24. In such circumstances I am required to undertake a balance of harm against the benefits for non-major development in a NL in accordance with the Monkhill[1] judgement. In this regard although the development would result in localised landscape harm it would not have a significant adverse effect on the purposes for which the Cotswolds NL has been designated. I find the economic and social benefits associated with boosting the supply of housing outweigh the harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the NL. As such, the harm to the Cotswolds NL would not constitute a strong reason for refusing the proposal.

25. In such circumstances paragraph 11 d) ii of the Framework is engaged. It states that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

26. It is evident that there is a pressing need for housing when considering the extent of the shortfall. As such, the delivery of two dwellings would make a notable contribution to housing supply meeting the needs of the area. The delivery of market units attracts great weight in favour of the development.

27. Turning to the economic implications - the development would provide jobs, but this would largely be limited to the construction phase. New residents would support services and facilities located within the village through increased expenditure. These social and economic benefits attract moderate weight in favour of the proposal.

28. On the other hand, I have found that the location of the proposed development would not be appropriate when taking into account the delivery strategy and the accessibility to day-to-day services and, albeit minor, harm to the local landscape. Even taking into account the objective to significantly boost the supply of housing and the Council's housing land supply position, the conflict between the proposal

[1] Monkhill Ltd V SSHCLG & Waverley Borough Council [2019] EWHC 1993 (Admin)

and the most important policies in the development plan should be given very significant weight in this appeal. In the context of the above, and taking into account the aforementioned other considerations, I find that the identified adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits of the proposal, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would not deliver a sustainable form of development. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

Conclusion

29. For the reasons set out above the appeal does not succeed.

B Thandi

INSPECTOR