
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 August 2026

by **E Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 September 2026

Appeal Ref: 6008970

Outmarsh Farm, Outmarsh, Semington, Wiltshire BA146JX

- 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 Robert Vaughan against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2025/08409.
 - The development is the siting of a static caravan for temporary residential use in connection with agricultural operations for a period of three years.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form, however; I have removed the superfluous words that are not acts of development.
3. I offered the parties opportunity to comment on whether recent revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) affected their case. In responding, the Council produced an updated version of their agricultural assessment, but while updating policy references it was materially the same as the previous version. While the appellant did not provide comment in relation to the Framework, the Council's submissions are essentially limited to updating policy references and do not indicate a major change in the approach that they would have taken in this case. Therefore, no injustice would arise from my taking account of this evidence.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether there is an essential need for a dwelling to accommodate a rural worker; and
 - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Essential need

5. The appeal site comprises a parcel of land at Outmarsh Farm, consisting of grassland and scrub interspersed with several trees. The site includes a steep embanked area, which I understand forms part of a former railway embankment.

The appeal submissions describe the enterprise as a small agricultural holding which currently includes sheep, goats, poultry, beehives and a developing orchard.

6. Permission is sought retrospectively for the siting of a static caravan at the site on a temporary basis for 3 years. It is to be occupied by an agricultural worker who manages the smallholding on behalf of the appellant, who resides at the farmhouse and is employed in a separate business which requires frequent periods away from the property. At the time of my site visit the caravan was unoccupied and being used for storage.
7. The site is located beyond the settlement boundary of Semington and therefore in an area of open countryside. Core Policy 1 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted January 2015 (WCS) sets out the settlement strategy and identifies a settlement hierarchy where new development will be directed. Core Policy 2 of the WCS seeks to deliver development in a sustainable pattern and states that development will not be permitted outside the limits of development, as defined on the policies map, other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within the WCS.
8. WCS Core Policy 48 indicates that outside the defined limits of development, proposals for residential development will be supported where they meet the accommodation needs required to enable workers to live at or in the immediate vicinity of their place of work in the interests of agriculture or forestry or other employment essential to the countryside. Further, proposals for accommodation to meet the needs of employment essential to the countryside should be supported by functional and financial evidence.
9. Policy HO11 of the recently published Framework, like the previous versions, lends similar support to isolated homes in the countryside where there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. There is also continuing support for the growth of agricultural enterprises. That may well include temporary worker's accommodation if such is necessary to support such rural business development, or to enable such economic growth to occur.
10. The appellant's Agricultural Business Plan¹ (ABP) submitted in support of the proposal indicates that the enterprise, which is to be expanded over the coming years, currently includes 15 sheep, 2 goats, 20 laying hens, 3 active beehives and an orchard. While sheep, poultry and beehives may require daily management, including feeding, watering, egg collection, welfare checks and hive monitoring, there is no compelling evidence to demonstrate that these activities are so frequent or time sensitive so as to necessitate a continuous on-site presence. Nor has it been shown that they could not be undertaken by a person carrying out regular visits to the site, or that the enterprise would generate a need for a full-time agricultural worker to enable its day-to-day management.
11. Having an on-site presence would undoubtedly provide benefits to the care of the animals during the lambing and kidding seasons, illness and times of severe weather. In that regard, I am mindful that intervention was necessary during recent birthing complications. Nonetheless, given the modest number of sheep and goats anticipated, and therefore limited frequency of lambing and kidding during relatively short periods of the year, based on the evidence before me, I am not satisfied that a worker's continuous on-site presence is necessary for the effective operation of

¹ Agricultural Business Plan and Supporting Statement For Temporary Siting of a Static Caravan (Three Years)

- the enterprise. Nor am I persuaded that any welfare needs arising during these periods could not be met through the provision of occasional or seasonal accommodation, even having regard to the livestock numbers forecast by year 3.
12. Moreover, while there may be a risk to poultry from foxes, it has not been demonstrated that appropriate protection could not be provided through the provision of suitable shelters or enclosures, for example, or how an overnight presence by an agricultural worker at the site would necessarily deter such predators.
 13. The appellant indicates that there have been incidences of theft and trespass at the site and that livestock, feed and equipment at the smallholding are therefore vulnerable to criminal activity. While I acknowledge that an on-site presence could provide an enhanced level of security, there is no compelling evidence before me that alternative measures, such as the installation of an alarm system, CCTV or remotely monitored security systems would not be an effective deterrent to prevent such risks.
 14. In addition to evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural enterprise, Planning Practice Guidance² sets out additional considerations that may be relevant when assessing the need for homes in the countryside for agricultural workers, including the degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future.
 15. The appellant's ABP includes a 3 year development plan which sets out the anticipated growth of the enterprise. This is supported by a 3 year forecast of the estimated annual income based on anticipated increases in livestock numbers and sales, rising from £6,700 in year one to £10,000 and £20,000 in years 2 and 3 respectively. However, the financial information submitted is limited and does not include a comprehensive breakdown of likely profits, expenditure, overheads and ongoing investment costs, such as the buying or selling of livestock, feedstuffs, equipment and other infrastructure. While a number of receipts of transactions have been provided, their purpose in relation to the enterprise is unclear. Accordingly, while I am mindful the enterprise is in its early stages and that the appellant seeks to grow the business, the limited information is insufficient to substantiate the projected levels of growth or profitability and does not demonstrate with any reasonable degree of certainty that the enterprise is currently financially viable or that it is likely to become so within the forthcoming 3 years.
 16. I appreciate that the appellant has already invested financially in the business. I also recognise that the siting of the static caravan, would be temporary and reversible in nature. Nonetheless, the evidence before me fails to demonstrate an essential need for a dwelling at the site, even on a temporary basis, and these considerations do not alter that conclusion.
 17. Furthermore, even if the existing farmhouse was not available for occupation by an agricultural worker, this does not alter my findings, given that an essential need for a dwelling at the site has not been demonstrated. While the holding is formally registered with DEFRA, the Rural Payments Agency, and holds a County Parish Holding number, these matters do not in themselves establish a need for an agricultural worker to reside on the site to support the operation of the enterprise.

² Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 67-010-20190722

18. The appellant refers to Core Policy 34 of the WCS in support of the proposal. However, the temporary siting of a static caravan for residential occupation in connection with agricultural operations, does not amount to employment development within use classes B1, B2 or B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Consequently, Core Policy 34 is not relevant to the proposal.
19. In light of the foregoing considerations, I therefore conclude that, based on the evidence before me, it has not been demonstrated that there is an essential need for a dwelling to accommodate a rural worker at the site. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with the aims of Policies CP1, CP2 and CP48 of the WCS.

Character and appearance

20. The land surrounding Outmarsh Farm largely comprises agricultural land which is rural in character. The open and largely undeveloped nature of the appeal site, together with trees and greenery contributes positively to the character of the area.
21. The siting of the static caravan introduces a degree of domestication to the rural context. However, it is relatively modest in scale, with a shallow pitched roof, and is positioned a short distance from the neighbouring dwelling, set back from the highway to the front and cut into the bank. As a result, in longer distance views it is mainly seen against a backdrop of existing vegetation and with rising landform, which limits visibility in wider views. Moreover, the extent of any domestic influence could be managed through suitably worded planning conditions, controlling matters such as the extent of garden to serve the residential unit, external lighting and works to the vehicular access.
22. Taking these factors together, I find that, despite its external finish, the caravan does not appear unduly conspicuous in the wider landscape and given the relatively contained nature of the appeal site, it does not significantly diminish the rural character or appearance of the surrounding agricultural land. Accordingly, it reflects the aims of the Framework that seek well-designed places, including that development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings.
23. While I note the Council's concern that the proposed temporary use may be ongoing for several years beyond the timeframe sought, I must assess the proposal based on the information before me, which seeks a permission for a temporary period.
24. For the foregoing reasons, the development does not harm the character and appearance of the area. In that regard, it does not conflict with the combined aims of Core Policies 51 and 57 of the WCS insofar as they require development to protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character and seek development of a high standard of design, which creates a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Other Matters

25. Outmarsh Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building, lies close to the site. I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed

building. The Council indicate that, due to the separation distance and intervening mature trees and vegetation with uneven land levels, which would prevent any intervisibility, the setting and significance of the listed building would not be adversely affected. Given my observations on site, I have no reason to disagree with the Council's assessment in this respect.

26. The development offers opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, which weighs in favour of the proposal. However, given the scale of the development, any benefits in this regard would be limited. The absence of objections from interested parties does not itself render the scheme acceptable.

Conclusion

27. While the proposal would not give rise to harm to the character and appearance of the area, in the absence of any compelling evidence to demonstrate that there is an essential need for a dwelling to accommodate a rural worker at the site, the development conflicts with Policies CP1, CP2 and CP48 of the WCS and therefore the development plan taken as a whole. Furthermore, no substantive evidence is put to me that there are any material considerations that would indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

E Worley

INSPECTOR