Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 June 2026

by K Allen MEng (Hons) MArch PGCert ARB RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 July 2026

Appeal Ref: 6005127
AJ Farm, Fenside Road, Warboys, PE28 2UW

- 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 Albert Bareham against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application Ref is 25/00081/FUL.
- The development proposed is RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE OF SITE FOR STORAGE CONTAINERS USING EXISTING ACCESS.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The change of use has already taken place, with a number of shipping containers and prefabricated buildings on site. However, the proposed drawings indicate an alternative layout than existing. For the avoidance of doubt, the appeal has been determined based on the submitted drawings.

Background and Main Issues

3. An additional drawing was submitted as part of the appeal which indicates the existing visibility splays on site. Further, the appellant confirmed that the existing 4m wide access could be increased to 6m to allow for two-way vehicle movements. Given the number of containers and the likely number of vehicle movements generated, the Council no longer have any concerns regarding highway safety and have withdrawn their second reason for refusal. Although the appeals process should not be used to evolve a scheme, I am satisfied that the drawing does not alter the scheme as proposed. Therefore, accepting the plan would not prejudice any interested party.

4. As such, the main issue is whether the appeal site would be an appropriate location for the proposed development, with particular regard to the Council's spatial strategy including the effect of the scheme on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The area is rural, characterised by open countryside, predominantly arable farmland and pastures with sporadic groups of agricultural buildings, including storage containers, and small pockets of woodland. The appeal site lies approximately 1.3km to the northeast of Warboys and comprises mainly hard surfacing, with mature planting along much of the north and east boundaries.

Fencing defines the shipping container area from the wider holding. The wider holding comprises paddocks with the appellant indicating that a rural business breeding and rearing geese was previously located on site. The appellant asserts that the site has not been used agriculturally for over 10 years and both parties agree that the scheme would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

6. Policy LP10 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019) (HLP) limits development within the Countryside to specific opportunities where amongst other things development recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Similarly, HLP Policy LP19 supports the expansion of existing businesses and the diversification of farms where the scale, character and siting will not have a detrimental impact on its immediate surroundings and wider landscape. The creation of new businesses is also supported subject to specific location or reuse criteria.

7. The appellant suggests that the number of containers on site could be limited to fifteen with additional planting provided to screen the site from the highway. Notwithstanding the potential screening, the site would be highly visible within the wider landscape and the introduction of a large number of shipping containers of varying sizes and colours, including advertisements has urbanised the site. As such, the scheme would appear dominant and incongruous when viewed within the surrounding open countryside, to the detriment of the wider Fen Margin landscape. As such, the proposal would fail to meet the criteria related to the expansion of existing businesses and the diversification of farms.

8. Whilst I acknowledge that the storage containers are already in use by customers, the scheme does not meet the location or reuse criteria for new businesses. The appeal site is not within or immediately adjoining an Established Employment Area and I have no substantiated evidence before me that it would not be possible to locate the business within the development boundary of Warboys or another nearby settlement. Further, the scheme does not involve the reuse of land last in use for business uses or the reuse or replacement of existing buildings.

9. Overall, I conclude that the appeal site would not be an appropriate location for the proposed development with particular regard to the Council's spatial strategy including the effect of the scheme on the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies LP10, LP11, LP12 and LP19 of the HLP, where amongst other things they require development within the countryside to be of a high-quality design that positively contributes to the area's character and identity.

10. Similarly, the scheme would conflict with Policy C1 of the National Design Guide where it requires that development responds positively to the features of the site and the surrounding context, enhancing existing positive qualities.

Other Matters

11. The site has access to an adopted road and there would be adequate parking and turning space. The living conditions of neighbouring residents would not be detrimentally affected. Further, no concerns have been raised with regards to ecology, biodiversity or flood risk. Nevertheless, this would be expected of any well-designed scheme and neither weighs in favour of nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan, as a whole, and there are no material considerations, including the provisions in the Framework and the benefits of the proposal, which indicate that the development should be determined other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

K Allen

INSPECTOR