



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2026

by M Aqbal BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 June 2026

Appeal Ref: 6003439

Oak House, Milford Road, Everton, Hampshire SO41 0JD

- 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 Peter Cross against the decision of New Forest National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is 24/01432FULL.
 - The development proposed is change of use of stables to form Pilates studio and beauty room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for change of use of stables to form Pilates studio and beauty room at Oak House, Milford Road, Everton, Hampshire SO41 0JD, in accordance with the terms of application Ref. 24/01432FULL and subject to the schedule of conditions to this Decision.

Preliminary Matters

2. I observed that the change of use has already been implemented. These uses, and the stable building they occupy, correspond with the submitted plans and drawings before me. I have determined the appeal on this basis and my observations on site.
3. The Council has confirmed that the reference to Policy DP48 in its decision is incorrect. The correct policy is SP48 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016–2036 ('LP').

Background and main issues

4. Although the Council has cited a single reason for refusal, this raises two main issues, which are:
 - i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the New Forest National Park ('the National Park'); and
 - ii) whether the proposal is in a suitable location having regard to the development plan.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') requires that great weight be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection. It also expects development in these areas to be limited and sensitively designed. The

statutory purposes of National Parks, set out in the Environment Act 1995, are to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 strengthens this by requiring decision-makers to seek to further these purposes.

6. The appeal site lies within a rural part of the National Park and forms part of a residential holding associated with Oak House, which is set back from the road and experienced as a relatively tranquil, domestic environment.
7. I acknowledge that there are examples of commercial uses in the wider area. However, these are generally located closer to the main road and experienced within a more active roadside context. In contrast, the appeal site is more secluded and closely associated with residential use. This makes it a more sensitive location where incremental change has greater potential to erode rural character.
8. The building subject to the appeal was approved as a stable block and, due to its modest scale, simple form and materials, appears as a typical rural outbuilding that is well integrated into its surroundings. The appeal proposal involves the commercial use of part of this building, with no external alterations.
9. The floorspace proposed for commercial use is limited, extending to approximately 30 square metres and comprising a small entrance area with ancillary facilities, together with a modest Pilates studio and a small beauty treatment room.
10. The Council's concerns focus on the introduction of commercial activity and the cumulative effects arising from the wider use of Oak House, including holiday accommodation. I recognise that the pattern of use has evolved beyond that originally envisaged for a dwelling with incidental equestrian use. I also accept that incremental changes, particularly in sensitive locations such as this, can lead to suburbanisation over time.
11. Nevertheless, the proposal is physically constrained within a small part of an existing building. Its size, layout and relationship to the existing dwelling would inherently limit the intensity of activity that could reasonably occur. This can be further controlled by conditions restricting the use of this part of the building to a Pilates studio and beauty treatment room only, preventing a broader range of Class E uses, and limiting any intensification and related activity.
12. While Oak House includes holiday accommodation, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that the appeal proposal itself would materially intensify activity to such an extent that it would fundamentally alter the character of the area or introduce a harmful urbanising effect into the wider landscape.
13. For the above reasons, the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the area and avoid a harmful urbanising influence. It would therefore accord with LP Policies DP2 and SP17, which require development to avoid unacceptable impacts and conserve the character and local distinctiveness of the National Park.
14. The proposal would also comply with the Framework's requirement to conserve landscape and scenic beauty within the National Park. Accordingly, I find no conflict with the statutory purposes of the National Park.

Suitability of location

15. The appeal site lies outside any defined village and is therefore subject to the spatial strategy set out in LP Policy SP4, which directs the majority of development to defined villages and seeks to strictly control development in the open countryside. The site is not well served by public transport, and future users of the proposed businesses are likely to rely on private vehicles.
16. LP Policy SP42 supports small-scale employment development outside defined villages, particularly where it involves the re-use of existing buildings and contributes to the local economy. The proposed development reflects small-scale service provision, which has the potential to serve local residents and is therefore not solely tourism-led. It therefore aligns with the broad objectives of this Policy.
17. Policy DP49 relates to the re-use of buildings outside defined villages and generally supports proposals where buildings are no longer required for their original use. In this case, the appeal building is relatively new and approved for equestrian purposes, which limits the degree of support that can be afforded under this Policy and gives rise to some tension with its intent.
18. The rural location and likely reliance on private vehicles weigh against the proposal. However, the development would be of a very limited scale, and the likely appointment-based nature of the proposed uses would allow the timing and frequency of visits to be managed. As a result, activity, traffic generation, staffing and visitor numbers would remain low, having regard to the constrained floorspace. Any potential for intensification could also be controlled through the use of planning conditions.
19. Moreover, the nature of the services proposed, being well-being uses typically arranged around day-to-day routines, suggests that they would primarily serve a local catchment, with users undertaking relatively short journeys.
20. With regard to the statutory purposes of the National Park, I recognise concerns relating to the introduction of commercial activity. However, for the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conserve landscape character, scenic beauty and local distinctiveness. Given its limited scale and controlled hours of operation, activity, including associated vehicle movements, would remain modest and would respect the tranquillity of the National Park and the living conditions of nearby residents.
21. The Council also refers to LP Policy SP48, which supports the land based economy. As the proposal has no direct functional link to land based uses, for example, agriculture or forestry, the Policy is of limited relevance in this case and does not indicate conflict.
22. I therefore find that, whilst there would be some conflict with the spatial strategy of Policy SP4, and limited tension with the intent of Policy DP49, the harm arising would be modest.
23. Set against this, the proposal would accord with Policy SP42 by supporting small-scale rural employment through the use of an existing building, and would not conflict with Policies DP2, SP17 or SP48. The Framework supports sustainable rural economic growth and the re-use of existing buildings where this can be achieved without unacceptable environmental harm. In this case, the

proposal represents a proportionate form of development that would deliver modest economic benefits without adverse impacts.

24. Taking the development plan as a whole, and having regard to the Framework, I conclude that the limited conflict identified is outweighed by the modest benefits of the proposal. The proposal would not undermine the overall spatial strategy or the purposes of the National Park and is therefore acceptable in this location.

Other Matters

25. The Council refers to a number of appeal decisions where commercial uses in rural areas were dismissed. Only one case relates to a National Park, where policy protection is more stringent; the others concern general countryside locations and are therefore of more limited relevance. In any event, they involve development of materially greater scale, activity, or associated works. By contrast, the appeal proposal is confined to part of an existing building, involves no external alterations, and would generate limited activity. Consequently, these decisions do not alter my overall conclusion.

Conditions

26. In imposing conditions, I have had regard to the requirements of the Planning Practice Guidance and the Framework. As the development has already commenced, I have not imposed the standard time limit for the implementation of the planning permission. However, I have imposed a condition specifying the approved plans in the interests of certainty.
27. In response to concerns regarding the potential intensification and urbanisation of the site and its location within the National Park, conditions have been imposed to limit the use to a Pilates studio and beauty treatment room only, thereby preventing a wider or more intensive Class E use and retaining the wider building for equestrian use, helping to preserve the rural character of the area and avoid its further erosion.
28. To safeguard the character and tranquillity of the National Park, and to protect the living conditions of nearby residential occupiers, thereby ensuring that the low level of activity remains compatible with its location and surroundings, a condition requiring the proposed uses to operate only during limited hours is necessary and reasonable. A condition to manage external lighting is necessary to safeguard local amenity and the dark skies of the National Park.
29. I have also considered whether a condition controlling noise would be necessary. Given the nature of the proposed uses, which are low-intensity, together with the limited floorspace and restricted hours of operation, the proposal is unlikely to give rise to noise impacts requiring further control. In particular, the hours restriction would avoid disturbance during more sensitive periods.
30. Moreover, a condition requiring that no sound be audible outside the building could be unduly restrictive in this context, particularly given the likely need for natural ventilation. In the absence of substantive evidence of harm, I am satisfied that such a condition would not be necessary to make the development acceptable.
31. The Council has also proposed restricting further structures. However, given the modest scale of the site and development, such a condition would not be necessary.

32. Where necessary and in the interests of clarity, flexibility and precision, I have altered the conditions to better reflect the relevant guidance.

Conclusion

33. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

M Aqbal
INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be retained in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Layout Stables as built (020/RP/0.13 Rev C); Plan Stables as built (020/RP/1.4 Rev C) and Elevations Sections Stables as built (020/RP/2.2).
- 2) The Pilates studio and beauty treatment room hereby permitted shall not operate outside the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays, and there shall be no operation on Sundays or Bank Holidays.
- 3) The use hereby permitted shall be limited to a Pilates studio and beauty treatment room only and for no other purpose, including any other purpose within Class E of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), or any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order, with or without modification.
- 4) The northern section of the building, identified as Stables 1 and 2 on drawing 020/RP/1.4 Rev C, shall be retained for the stabling of horses and shall not be used for any other purpose.
- 5) No external lighting shall be installed on the site unless details of such proposals have been submitted to and approved in writing by the New Forest National Park Authority.