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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 January 2026

by **A Owen MA BA(Hons) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 January 2026

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### Appeal Ref: 6001602

### Old Barn House, High Road, Eastcote HA5 2EW

- 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 Michael Cowen against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
  - The application Ref is 1598/APP/2025/1602.
  - The development proposed is erection of two semi-detached dwellinghouses with associated parking and landscaping.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the development on:
  - i) the character and appearance of the area including its trees and the Eastcote Village Conservation Area;
  - ii) biodiversity;
  - iii) the setting of Old Barn House, a Grade II listed building;
  - iv) highway safety, in respect of parking provision; and
  - v) fire safety.

### Reasons

#### *Character and appearance*

3. The appeal site accommodates a two storey building known as The Old Barn house, and the land behind it which is partly used for car parking and partly undeveloped, being covered in some trees and ruderal vegetation. There was some evidence of fly tipping on this vegetated area at my site visit. The site is within the Eastcote Village Conservation Area (EVCA).
4. It is understood that Old Barn House is in use as an office. It sits in a row of other commercial buildings including a hand car wash and a hairdressers to either side. Further west there is Black Horse parade which contains shops with flats above. Opposite the site is a narrow area of woodland flanking the river Pinn, and there is a residential area to its rear. The nearest houses behind the site are terraced townhouses with accommodation over three floors.
5. Due to this mix of uses, the principle of residential use would not be incongruous. In addition, visually, development on High Road is varied, as best evidenced by the contrast between Old Barn House and the more modern retail parade to its west.

- Nonetheless, development on High Road is focussed along the street frontage and there are no other examples near the site of development in a backland position other than single storey garages and other ancillary structures.
6. The EVCA is largely focussed around the river Pinn and the wooded areas alongside it. To that end, the Council's leaflet on the EVCA states that the character of the area includes its extensive natural landscaping and trees. The EVCA also includes the development along the roads, including High Road. The linear pattern of development along High Road also contributes strongly to the significance of the EVCA.
  7. The proposed dwellings would be sited behind Old Barn House. Although the houses would have a limited presence in the street scene, it would be possible to see them when walking past the vehicular entrance to the site, particularly because of their slightly elevated siting, even accounting for the excavation work to level the site as shown on the plans. The houses would therefore appear as a conspicuous form of development separate from the frontage building. It would therefore contrast with the pattern of built form locally and depart from one of the key features of the EVCA's significance.
  8. Planning permission was granted in 2012 for a development on this site that would also be behind Old Barn House in a backland position. Although the EVCA was designated before that time, that planning permission was not implemented and was several years ago. It has little bearing on my view of the current proposal.
  9. The plans show that the proposal would, at its highest, be marginally taller than Old Barn House. Policy DMH6 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 (2020) (LP2) relates to garden and backland development. The policy, and the explanatory text, set out a presumption against development on garden land, but go on to add that other backland development will be assessed against four criteria. One of these is that development must be more intimate in mass and scale and lower than frontage properties. By being higher than Old Barn House, the development would conflict with this criterion.
  10. With respect to trees, the development would necessitate the removal of nine individual trees and a group of Cherry Plum trees. Five of the individual trees to be removed are identified in the appellant's Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) as being category B2 trees. This means they are of moderate value for mainly landscape qualities. There are no category A trees and nine category B trees on site. Some of the trees to be removed, notably T15, T17 and T18 are at least 10m tall and are visible from High Road and from some positions on Azalea Walk. Indeed, the AIA shows that there are no trees on the site taller than T18. As such, the development would result in the loss of some of the tallest, and most of the best quality, trees on the site.
  11. The AIA surveyed 36 trees and groups of trees, of which nine<sup>1</sup> are on adjoining land and one, S35, is only a stump. Nonetheless, the majority of the remaining 26 trees on site would be retained. But these are all along the boundaries of the site, and so the central part of the site would be devoid of trees. The loss of all the trees in this part of the site, and trees that are the tallest on site, would have a significant effect on the verdant character of the area, which contributes strongly to the significance of the EVCA.

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<sup>1</sup> T1 to T8 and T11

12. Four replacement trees are proposed, and shown on the plans. However, one of them is within the canopy of T22 so its growth may be compromised, and the other three, whilst in the corner most bereft of trees, would not adequately mitigate for the loss of five tall and mature category B trees.
13. Overall, the proposal, due to its contrast with the pattern of built form and the loss of trees, would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and the EVCA. The harm to the EVCA would be less than substantial and of a low to moderate nature. Public benefits of the proposal include the provision of two three-bed dwellings to add to the supply at a time when, I understand, there is a need for such units, and an improvement in the appearance of an area of vacant and underused land. However those benefits only carry moderate weight, given the small quantum of units proposed and the lack of prominence of the site in public views. They do not outweigh the great weight I give to the conservation of this heritage asset.
14. As such the proposal would be contrary to London Plan (2021) policy HC1, policy HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 1 (2012) (LP1) and policy DMHB 1 of the LP2 which all seek to ensure that development conserves or enhances the significance of heritage assets, and LP2 policy DMHB 4 which seeks the same but specifically in relation to conservation areas. It would also conflict with LP2 policy DMHB 11 which requires development to harmonise with the local context, including in terms of scale and street patterns.
15. The proposal would also fail to accord with LP2 policy DMHB 14 which seeks to retain existing trees, and London Plan policy G7 which says that wherever possible trees of value, including Category A and B trees, should be retained.
16. I find little conflict with LP2 policy DMHB 12 which relates to streets and the public realm, given the layout of the site and its context.

#### *Biodiversity*

17. The woodland opposite the site is not large in itself, but it forms part of a corridor of mature trees along the length of the river Pinn connecting to other larger woodland areas. These features could provide habitat for a number of species including bats which are statutorily protected. Indeed, the trees currently on the site to be removed could also support bats and other species. No ecological assessment has been undertaken.
18. Even though I understand the Council did not ask for an ecological assessment to be provided, it is reasonable for some assessment to be necessary to assess the potential for the site to provide habitat for protected species in light of the trees nearby and on the site. The anecdotal evidence of the appellant's agent would not be sufficient to negate the need for this, and it would not be appropriate to defer such a fundamental matter to a condition. Without any assessment, I could not be confident that protected species would not be harmed by the proposal.
19. As such I cannot conclude that the development would accord with LP2 policy DMEI 7 which requires developments to demonstrate that they would not have an unacceptable ecological effect, and London Plan policy G6 which requires any impacts on biodiversity to be informed by the best available ecological information.

### *Listed Building*

20. Old Barn House is a Grade II listed building, and was originally a hall from the late medieval period. Its significance is informed by its historic and attractive architectural appearance. It is prominent in the street scene being further forward than most other buildings and taller than the adjacent units. Its prominent setting in the street scene contributes positively to its significance. In contrast, the space behind the building, and on which the proposal would be located, makes only a limited contribution to its setting given it is largely hidden from the street scene.
21. The proposal would be separated from the listed building by a car parking and manoeuvring area as well as some landscaping. Although the development would result in substantial built form to the rear of the listed building, there would be a significant distance between the two buildings. Indeed, the gap would be greater than between the listed building and the three storey Black Horse parade.
22. The design of the development does not reflect that of Old Barn House. However, due to the separation between the two buildings and the variety in the design of buildings nearby which are much closer to the listed building and make a stronger contribution to its setting, I do not consider the design of the development would detract from its setting. In particular, the rear dormers would not be likely to be seen in the same views as the listed building. Also, as the trees add little to the setting of the listed building, their loss would not be harmful in this respect.
23. As such the development would not harm the setting of the listed building, and therefore would not harm the significance of this heritage asset. The proposal, in this regard therefore, would accord with policy HE1, as set out above and LP2 policy DMHB 2 which seeks to ensure that the setting of listed buildings are not harmed.

### *Parking*

24. The hardstanding on the site currently provides space for the parking of about eight cars. The plans show that four spaces would be retained. The appellants advise the existing office building totals 174m<sup>2</sup> and that, in line with the Council's parking standards for office uses, only two parking spaces would be necessary. The Council do not dispute this. As such, although there would be a considerable reduction in parking provision, the provision of two spaces to serve the retained office building would be acceptable. Consequently, I do not consider that the reduction in parking would threaten the viability of the listed building.
25. The Council advise that a maximum of three parking spaces would be needed to serve the two dwellings. The provision of two spaces to serve the houses, in addition to the two to serve the offices, would therefore accord with the standard.
26. I recognise that an insufficient amount of parking provision could result in indiscriminate parking on High Road. However my attention has been drawn to part of the Council's parking standards which advises that mixed uses may generate parking demands at different times of the day and that parking provision can reflect this. It is reasonable to consider that the parking demand from the proposed houses may be at different times of day to that generated from the offices. As such, even though the two spaces for the dwellings is below the maximum, the four spaces provided in total may be able to be shared by both the residential and

commercial units and hence avoid the likelihood of cars being parked beyond the site.

27. As such I do not consider that the parking provision is insufficient such that it would be likely to result in indiscriminate parking which could harm highway safety. The proposal would therefore accord with LP2 policies DMT 1 and DMT 2, and London Plan policy T4 which together set out that development will be required to meet its transport needs without having a significant adverse impact on transport or on the safety of all road users.

#### *Fire Safety*

28. I understand details were provided with the application which stated that a fire mister could be used in the homes. This is because the driveway would not be accessible by a fire engine and the houses would be in excess of the maximum hose length from a fire engine parked on High Road.
29. Although further details of the final design of the houses and any fire safety measures would need to be provided, I have no reason to consider that such details could not adequately be secured by a condition if the appeal were allowed, given the fairly regular design of the houses. As such the proposal would not fail to accord with London Plan policy D12 which requires proposals to achieve the highest standards of fire safety.

#### **Conclusion**

30. Although the development would provide sufficient parking, would not harm the setting of the listed building and could achieve the highest standards of fire safety, it would fail to ensure protected species are not harmed, and would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area including its trees. In addition, the public benefits carry only moderate weight and do not outweigh the harm to the EVCA.
31. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other considerations to indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

*Andrew Owen*

INSPECTOR