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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 February 2026

by **John Felgate BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 April 2026

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### Appeal Ref: 6002979

#### Land at Home Farm, Longville in the Dale, Shropshire TF13 6DS

- 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 John Lea & Sons against the decision of Shropshire Council.
  - The application Ref is 25/01447/OUT.
  - The development proposed is the erection of 9 dwellings.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Application for costs

2. An application for costs has been made by the Council against the appellant. That application is the subject of a separate decision.

### Preliminary matters

3. The application seeks outline permission with all matters reserved. The details shown on the submitted plans are therefore illustrative, and I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.
4. During the period while the application was under consideration by the Council, in May 2025, an amended site boundary plan (No 74892/25/01 – Rev A) and revised illustrative layout (No 74892/25/03 – Rev A) were submitted. These were taken into account by the Council in reaching its decision. I have therefore done likewise.
5. Subsequently, as part of their appeal submission, the appellants have produced a further slight revision to the layout plan (No 74892/25/03 – Rev B), and also a more detailed plan relating to highway visibility (Fig JPH1). Given that both plans are illustrative, and are clearly designed to address matters raised in the Council's refusal reasons, I can see no reason not to accept them. I have considered these alongside the other plans that are before me.

### Planning background

6. The appeal site lies at the centre of the small village of Longville in the Dale. It is currently used as an agricultural contractors' yard, with various buildings and the storage of farming machinery and equipment. Planning permission has recently been granted to the appellants for a replacement yard and buildings on another site, just outside the village.
7. The development plan for the area comprises the Shropshire Core Strategy (the SCS), adopted in March 2011, and the Site Allocations and Management of

Development Plan (known as the SAMDev), adopted in December 2015. In policy terms, the village of Longville in the Dale is treated as part of the countryside.

8. It is agreed by both the Council and the appellants that the County does not currently have a 5-year supply of land for housing development. The Council refers to its published figure of 4.73 years, based on the position in April 2024. However, the appellants draw attention to an appeal decision at Tilstock, dated 9 December 2025<sup>1</sup>, in which after detailed analysis, the inspector calculated the supply to be 3.81 years. In a subsequent appeal decision in January 2026, at Cruckton<sup>2</sup>, the inspector appears to have accepted that the range was between 4.46 - 4.73 years, but did not find it necessary to examine the evidence in any detail; nor is there any indication that the Tilstock decision was made known to him. To my mind, the Tilstock decision in December 2025 appears to provide the most authoritative evidence available, as well as being more up to date than the Council's figure.
9. A replacement Local Plan was submitted for examination in September 2021, but was withdrawn, on the advice of the examining inspectors, in July 2025.

### **Main issues**

10. In the light of the above, and all the various submissions made, the main issues in the appeal appear to be as follows:
  - in principle, whether the appeal site is an acceptable site for residential development, having regard to the relevant planning policies relating to housing development in the area;
  - the effect of the proposed development on the setting of the listed farmhouse at Home Farm;
  - the effect on the Shropshire Hills National Landscape;
  - and the effect on highway safety.

### **Reasons for the decision**

#### *Location*

11. In the SCS, Policy CS1 seeks to direct most development to Shrewsbury and the market towns. In the rural areas, new housing and other development is to be focussed on settlements designated as 'community hubs' and 'community clusters'. Outside these, development will be mainly for economic diversification and for local community needs. Policy CS5 states that development in the countryside is to be strictly controlled in accordance with national policies. Policy CS6 also requires development generating significant traffic to be located in accessible locations, where opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport can be maximised. In the SAMDev, Policy MD7A reaffirms that housing in the countryside is to be strictly controlled, and makes clear that exception sites may be permitted only where there is evidence of a local housing need.
12. In the present case, Longville in the Dale is not included amongst the villages defined as community hubs or clusters. The strict controls sought by Policies CS5 and MD7A are therefore applicable. The proposed scheme would not fall within

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<sup>1</sup> APP/L3245/W/25/3362414: Land East of Tilstock Road, Tilstock

<sup>2</sup> Appeal Ref 6001247: The Chestnuts, Cruckton

the provisions in Policy CS1 for economic development or community needs. Although a small proportion of the new dwellings would be affordable, the remainder would be built for the open market, and there is no evidence that these would be essential for the affordable units to be viable; the scheme therefore does not qualify as an allowable exception site. Nor is there any evidence regarding the specific needs of the village, as sought by Policy MD7A. The development would therefore conflict with these locational policies.

13. Furthermore, following the loss in recent times of the village pub and a farm shop, Longville in the Dale has no local facilities and only a very limited bus service, which runs mainly to suit school times. For the more able, the facilities at Church Stretton and Much Wenlock, and the village school at Rushbury, would be within cycling distance, but none of these could be regarded as walkable for normal day-to-day purposes. The occupants of the proposed new dwellings would therefore be largely dependent on car travel, contrary to the aims of Policy CS6.
14. However, the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) makes clear the importance of achieving a significant boost to the supply of housing nationally, and the key role that is attached to the 5-year supply calculation for this reason. In this context, Footnote 8 states that in the absence of a 5-year supply, the most relevant development plan policies should be regarded as out of date. In the present case, this clearly must include those parts of SCS Policies CS1, CS5 and CS6, and SAMDev Policy MD7A, that are relevant to the appeal. Whilst it may be arguable that these policies are consistent with certain other aspects of the NPPF, including those that relate to the protection of the countryside, and managing patterns of growth to promote sustainable transport, it is also evident that in recent times their effect has been to limit the supply of housing. It therefore follows that the continued strict application of these policies seems likely to hinder the prospects for meeting the County's future needs. Treating these development plan policies as no longer up to date would help to remedy the present shortfall and support the national policy aspiration to increase housing supply across the board.
15. In addition, the NPPF also emphasises the important role that new housing can play in supporting the vitality of rural communities, and that the opportunities for sustainable transport in the countryside should not be expected to match those in urban areas. In this case, although Longville in the Dale has almost no facilities of its own, the addition of some new housing would be likely to support those that exist in the nearby towns, and those that remain in the surrounding rural area, including the existing bus service. It would also have the potential to play some role in sustaining the village itself as a viable small community, by widening the mix of housing types and consequently the age range and social profile of the population. In this context, I also give some weight to the support given by the Parish Council.
16. On balance I find that, in this case, the harm that would arise from the conflict with Policies CS1, CS5, CS6 and MD7A is outweighed by the benefits that would arise in terms of housing provision and community support. In this particular case therefore, the conflict with these development plan policies does not, on its own, justify the refusal of permission for the appeal proposal.

### *Listed building setting*

17. The farmhouse at Home Farm is a Grade II listed building. The earliest surviving parts originate from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the main front part added in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Seen from the main B4371, the house appears as a classic example of its type and period. It is an attractive 2-storey red-brick structure, with a rectangular floorplan, symmetrical elevations and fenestration, small-paned windows with stone lintels, and a tiled and hipped main roof. In addition to the house itself, there is a range of brick-built former agricultural buildings, arranged around a foldyard, in the 'model farm' manner. Its significance lies firstly in its commanding visual presence, at the heart of the village; secondly in its value as an example of the building styles and techniques of its time; and thirdly its evidential value as part of the social and economic history of the village and of the agricultural industry over the course of three centuries.
18. In the SAMDev, listed buildings are protected by Policy MD13, which seeks to ensure that developments avoid harm or loss of significance to heritage assets and their settings. In the NPPF, paragraphs 212 and 213 require that the conservation of all heritage assets is given great weight, and in the case of a listed building or other designated asset, any harm to the asset's significance, including its setting, requires clear and convincing justification.
19. In the present case, the appeal site lies adjacent to what would appear to have been at one time part of the farmyard to Home Farm, and is now the house's domestic garden. The site itself would once have been agricultural or horticultural land associated with the farm. It now contains three substantial buildings, all of relatively modern origins and utilitarian design, together with a large yard area. At the time of my visit, both the buildings and yard were being used for the parking and storage of agricultural vehicles and machinery, farm equipment and supplies of various kinds, and the parking of staff vehicles.
20. From the listed farmhouse, the appeal site is seen in the foreground of views towards open farmland, and towards the Wenlock Edge hillside that forms its landscape setting. In public views from the street, the appeal site appears through gaps in the frontage as a backdrop to the house. From the site itself, there are views of the rear of the building which are not seen from elsewhere. Having regard to the physical proximity between the appeal site and the farmhouse, their visual relationship, and the evident functional relationship between the two, both historically and in the present, there can be no doubt in my view that the site clearly forms part of the listed building's setting.
21. In its current condition and use, the modern buildings and vehicles on the appeal site are not attractive, and in this regard they do not complement the listed farmhouse. But nevertheless, they are visibly agricultural in nature, and this serves as a visual clue, reminding the viewer of the historic functional link. Consequently, despite the site's poor visual appearance, the overall effect of the present use on the listed building's setting is, on balance, a positive one. Similar considerations apply to the other impacts identified by the appellants, in terms of noise, dust, and vehicular activity; in heritage terms, these relatively minor negative effects are outweighed by the positive influence of the existing use in reinforcing the farmhouse's historical link to the surrounding land. In all these respects, I would fully accept that the positive and negative effects are finely balanced, but even so, my view is that the overall net impact of the existing use on

the listed building's setting, and therefore on its heritage significance, is generally more positive than negative.

22. In the present appeal, the illustrative scheme suggests a layout of nine regularly spaced, detached and semi-detached dwellings, in a fairly conventional linear arrangement, fronting onto a straight access road and a turning head, with an open area on one side for biodiversity. I appreciate that, in most situations, a layout along these lines would be likely to be regarded as uncontentious. However, the general thrust of the Council's criticism is that, on this particular site, there is a need for something with rather more imagination, creativity and visual interest, in order to complement the heritage asset and its setting. I find myself in agreement with this view. Having regard for the site's positioning, between the listed farmhouse and the open agricultural land beyond, it seems to me that a development laid out in the way illustrated would fail to respect the sensitivity of the building's setting, and thus would fail to compensate for the harm that would arise due to the loss of the existing use with its historical connection to agriculture.
23. I fully appreciate that, given the nature of the present application, it would still be open to the Council at the detailed stage to refuse any submission that it found unacceptable on heritage grounds. But in order to do so, the authority would need to be sure that a better scheme could be devised, which would accommodate the specified amount of nine dwellings, in a way that properly safeguarded the listed building's setting. The present illustrative plan does not provide that assurance.
24. For these reasons, I find that the appeal proposal would cause harm to the significance of the listed Home Farm house, due to its potential to result in an unsympathetic and intrusive form of development within the building's setting. In this regard, the proposal would conflict with the aims of SAMDev Policy MD13.

### *National Landscape*

25. The appeal site lies within the boundary of the area which is now designated the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, and is also known as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB). In the SAMDev, Policy MD12 seeks to conserve the County's natural environment, and identifies the AONB as a key environmental asset, where development having an adverse impact should only be permitted if the harm is unavoidable. In the NPPF, paragraph 187 requires that valued landscapes be protected in a manner commensurate with their status and quality. In the case of National Landscapes, paragraph 189 makes clear that great weight is to be given to their conservation and enhancement, and paragraph 190 states that permission for major development should be refused other than in exceptional circumstances.
26. In the present case, the village of Longville in the Dale lies on the flat plain which runs alongside the foot of the Wenlock Edge escarpment. Although the appeal site sits fairly centrally within the village, and is partly surrounded by existing built development, at its southern end the site extends into open land which is less well contained. As I saw on my visit, this southernmost portion of the site, beyond the existing buildings, is readily visible in medium distance views from a south-easterly direction, and particularly from the unnamed road that leads southwards from Longville to join the B4368 near Broadstone.
27. On the appellants' illustrative layout, four 2-storey houses and two double garages, shown as plots 6-9, are suggested in this part of the site. To my mind, any

development which followed the submitted plan with regard to this part of the site would appear as breaching the existing natural boundaries, and disrupting the sensitive interface between the village and its hinterland. Developing the site in this manner would thus result in an unwelcome visual intrusion into the open plain, at odds with the established settlement pattern, significantly diminishing the attractiveness of the surrounding high-quality landscape.

28. As discussed previously, I am fully aware the Council would not be bound by the details shown on the present illustrative plan. It might be possible at the reserved matters stage to come up with a different way of developing the site so as to mitigate the impact to an acceptable degree, such as through relocating the open space, substantial landscaping, control of building heights, and good design. But none of the currently submitted plans demonstrates that the site could satisfactorily accommodate nine dwellings without harm to the valued and nationally important landscape of the area.
29. In coming to this view, I have paid regard to the submissions of both parties with regard to the question of whether the appeal proposal should be regarded as 'major development' for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 190. And in this context I have also considered the contents of the Shropshire Hills Management Plan<sup>3</sup>, so far as relevant. In this case, having regard to the relatively small number of dwellings involved, the location of the site in relation to the village, and the general compatibility of the proposed land use, it seems to me that the development now proposed would not be 'major'. However, in view of the matters discussed above and elsewhere in this decision, the point is not determinative in the present appeal.
30. For the reasons explained, I find that the appeal proposal would be likely to cause harm to the character and appearance of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, due to its potential to extend beyond the existing built development around the site, damaging the attractive views of the surrounding landscape. In this regard, the proposal would conflict with the aims of SAMDev Policy MD12.

### *Highway safety*

31. The site is served by an existing access which emerges onto the B4371 on the inside of a sharp bend, and directly opposite the junction with the local road that heads north towards the nearby villages of Gretton and Plaish. Visibility to the right is limited by Home Farmhouse, and is also affected to some degree by the low stone wall around the latter's front garden, and by a large oak tree (T1) which is the subject of a tree preservation order. In addition, in order to see oncoming vehicles or pedestrians in this direction, the driver of the emerging vehicle must turn their head, and look back over their shoulder at quite a sharp angle. To the left, the line of sight is restricted by the front hedge of the neighbouring property. All together, these constraints make the task of designing a safe access for any new development a challenging one.
32. The appellants' highway evidence makes a persuasive case as to the reasons why some of the relevant standards in Manual for Streets (MfS) could be relaxed in this case without an unacceptable reduction in safety. In broad terms I tend to agree with the underlying point, that MfS should be applied with a degree of flexibility, having regard for the circumstances of the particular site. In particular, in the present case, I see no reason to discount the use of visibility splays which are

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<sup>3</sup> The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30, approved February 2026

measured to different points on the carriageway, other than the nearside kerb, if this would still allow adequate stopping distances to be achieved. I also agree that minor obstructions, such as a single tree trunk or the coping stones on the top of a wall, need not mean that the remaining visibility is so compromised as to be unsafe.

33. However, where it is proposed to depart from MfS's recommendations, it seems to me that detailed and specific evidence will usually be needed, to show that the resulting development is likely to be safe. In the present case, although the appellants' case makes assertions as to the visibility splays that can be achieved, the accompanying plans do not fully demonstrate that these claims are achievable. This is for a number of reasons: the various site layout plans are at too small a scale for clarity; the 'visibility shadow zone' plan shows only part of the relevant highway geometry; and there are inconsistencies between the plans themselves, and between them and the written evidence. None of the plans show clearly the achievable visibility to the left (south), and none of the evidence deals in any way with the relationship to the junction opposite, and the resulting potential for conflicting movements.
34. I appreciate that the site access has been used by the existing agricultural business on the site for many years, and I have no reason to doubt that for most of this time it has operated safely. But there is no clear evidence as to the numbers or types of vehicles generated by that use. Without that information, there is no basis on which to make any comparison.
35. Given the outline nature of the application, any permission granted would be subject to a requirement for further details of access. But on the information before me, it has not been demonstrated that any such details would be capable of ensuring reasonable levels of safety for a residential development on the scale now proposed.
36. I therefore find that, based on the available evidence, the development as currently proposed would cause unacceptable risks to highway safety. In this regard, the scheme would conflict with paragraph 115(b) of the NPPF, which requires safe and suitable access for all users.

## **Other matters**

### *Trees*

37. If the site access were to be designed as shown on the revised layout plan No 74892/25/03-Rev A, then tree T1 would be removed. T1 is one of a number that are protected by a recently-made tree preservation order. I agree that this large oak tree makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the village, and to the setting of the listed building, and that for this reason its loss would cause additional visual harm.
38. But that layout plan, like all the other options submitted, is illustrative. It also pre-dates the appellants' later highways evidence. And although I have found that evidence to be inconclusive as to whether a safe access could be designed, it does nevertheless provide some grounds for questioning the earlier assumption that this would depend on the removal of T1.

39. Consequently, on the evidence before me, I find no clear reason to anticipate any likely adverse likely impact on T1 or any of the other existing trees. However, the lack of harm in this respect weighs neither for nor against the appeal.

#### *Biodiversity Net Gain*

40. The application, when submitted, was accompanied by the required Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) 'metric' spreadsheet, which indicated that a BNG of 39% could be achieved, within the site, in both habitat units and hedgerow units. This calculation does not appear to have been disputed. Subsequently, during the course of the application, the amended site boundary plan, No 74892/25/01-Rev A, was submitted. This amended plan increased the site area, by adding two narrow slivers of land within the visibility splays, to either side of the site access. However, the previously submitted metric does not appear to have been recalculated or resubmitted.
41. Logically, it seems likely that the change to the site area will have some impact on the BNG calculation, albeit probably a small one, and in these circumstances I agree that it might have been preferable for an updated metric to be submitted, to clarify the extent of that impact. But I am not aware of any legal requirement to that effect. Nor does it appear that the lack of such information prevented the Council from continuing to deal with the application and reaching a decision.
42. If permission were to be granted, any such permission would be subject to the statutory deemed condition under paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The effect of that condition is that the development could not be lawfully commenced until a BNG Plan had been submitted and approved by the Council. Such a plan would have to include an updated calculation, reflecting the approved site boundaries and any reserved matters, and would have to demonstrate that a BNG of 10% would be achieved. Having regard to the large margin indicated by the original calculation, and the minor nature of the subsequent change to the site boundary, plus the nature of the additional land involved, comprising highway verge, a bus lay-by, and part of a closely-mown lawn, there seems no reason to doubt that the required 10% would be achievable.
43. In the light of these matters, I find the submitted BNG information adequate. The potential for a net gain greater than the statutory requirement carries some modest weight in favour of the appeal.

#### *Affordable housing*

44. A unilateral undertaking has been entered into by the appellants, which purports to provide for two of the proposed dwellings to be provided as affordable housing. It is not disputed that this would be a sufficient level of provision for the scheme, having regard to Policy CS11 of the SCS, the Council's supplementary guidance, and relevant national policies, and taking account also of Longville in the Dale's status as a designated rural area under Section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985.
45. The wording of the undertaking provides that the two units in question would be for sale or rent, and would be provided for persons whose needs are not met by the housing market, and that this may include housing that provides a subsidised route to ownership, and/or housing for essential workers. I appreciate that this wording, so far as it goes, matches that used in part of the definition of affordable housing which is contained in NPPF Annex 2. However, in the NPPF, the definition

continues, at (a) – (d), by setting out the conditions that must be met for any particular unit to qualify as affordable under each of the various categories. In the present case, the undertaking contains no reference to these conditions, and no requirement to meet them. The undertaking therefore provides no means of ensuring that the units in question would in fact be affordable in terms of the relevant planning policies.

46. I have no doubt as to the genuineness of the appellants' intention to provide affordable housing, but clearly that is not enough, as the offer can only carry weight if made legally binding. In this case the defect in the drafting of the obligation makes it ineffective.
47. The Council has not commented on this aspect, but to my mind the flaw is fundamental to the purposes of the obligation and therefore is one that cannot be ignored. Had I been minded to allow the appeal, it would have been possible to allow time for the shortcomings to be remedied, but in view of my findings on the other matters covered in this decision, that would not be an appropriate course of action in this case.
48. In these circumstances, I find that the undertaking in respect of affordable housing carries no weight.

### **Planning balance**

49. As set out above, I have found that the proposed development would fail to accord with the SCS and SAMDev Policies CS1, CS5, CS6 and MD7A, with regard to the spatial strategy for the location of new housing. It would also cause harm to the setting of the listed Home Farm, and to the landscape of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, contrary to Policies MD13 and MD12 respectively. No development plan policies have been identified which can be said to offer any direct support for the appeal proposal. The scheme therefore conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole. It would also pose risks to highway safety, contrary to relevant NPPF policy.
50. On the other side of the planning balance, the development would bring some benefits, including the provision of market housing to reduce the shortfall in the County's 5-year land supply, and the contribution that it could make to sustaining rural community life, both economically and socially. For the reasons already rehearsed, I consider that these particular benefits would be significant, and in the circumstances, these benefits would outweigh the essentially abstract harm arising from the conflict with the development plan's locational policies, CS1, CS5, CS6 and MD7A.
51. But nevertheless, the tangible harm that I have identified to the listed building's setting, National Landscape and road safety would remain. As noted elsewhere in this decision, the first two of these are subject to national policies in the NPPF that provide strong reasons justifying refusal. In these circumstances, NPPF paragraph 11(d) makes it clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, set out elsewhere in that paragraph, is not applicable. Consequently, on the evidence before me therefore, I consider that the harm to the heritage asset and to the valued landscape both carry substantial weight against the proposal. The harm to safety adds further significant weight against.

52. In addition to the benefits noted above, the development would provide some further economic and environmental benefits, in terms of construction jobs, and enhanced BNG. However, very little evidence has been advanced on these matters. I also note that the development would potentially facilitate the relocation of the existing agricultural contracting business, securing the future of that operation, and removing a source of noise and dust close to residential neighbours. But I am not aware of any formal commitment to that effect, and no further detail has been provided. Consequently the weight that I can give to these additional potential benefits is limited.
53. Having regard to all of the above, it seems to me that the only realistic conclusion that can be drawn is that, even when all the scheme's benefits are added together, they are clearly and significantly outweighed by the combined weight of the identified harms.
54. I have taken account of all the other matters raised, including the possibility that the affordable housing could have been properly secured by way of a revised undertaking, but even so, I can find nothing that would alter the overall planning balance as set out above.

### **Conclusion**

55. In view of the lack of a 5-year land supply, the need for housing is a matter that commands considerable weight. But nonetheless, the present appeal scheme, due to its lack of detail in respect of layout and access, fails to ensure that important considerations relating to the effects on the listed building, National Landscape, and highway safety, could be managed without unacceptable harm.
56. For these reasons, I conclude that the conflict that the appeal scheme would involve with relevant policies of the development plan, is not outweighed by other material considerations. It follows that the appeal must fail. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

*J Felgate*

INSPECTOR