
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2016

by S M Holden BSc MSc CEng MICE TPP FCIHT MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27TH September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/16/3152910

Farnfields Barn, Pottens Mill Lane, Broad Oak, Heathfield TN21 8UA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Perrett against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2016/0345/FR, dated 10 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 4 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is extension to stable to form tack room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The extension to the stable has already been constructed and I note there is a dispute between the parties about its current use. However, this is not a matter for me to determine in the context of a section 78 appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the tack room on the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies to the east of Pottens Mill Lane and is part of a larger 4.53 hectare site that includes Farnfields Barn, which was converted into a dwelling just over thirty years ago. It is in a remote part of the High Weald AONB and is accessed via a long, narrow lane that also serves Great Stonehurst and Little Stonehurst Farm. There are some other widely scattered houses and agricultural buildings in the locality. The house and its associated outbuildings occupy a position on a ridge within the undulating landscape. The land falls away towards a stream to the east of the site.
 5. The L-shaped stable building, believed to be erected in 2004, comprises four stables and is constructed of timber with a dual pitched roof. The corner room has been partitioned so it can be used as a feed store and tack room. On its south-western side the plans show a farm machinery store, which occupies the full depth of the stable building. The enlarged tack room has been added to the rear of the existing feed store/fourth stable and projects some 3.9m
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- beyond the depth of the existing building. It is approximately 8m wide and occupies the full width of the original stable block.
6. The new tack room represents a significant increase in the footprint of the building. Although it is predominantly constructed of wood its mono-pitched roof does not relate effectively to the shape of the original stables. I appreciate that the building is not easy to see from the lane. However, that is primarily because the site is not only enclosed by vegetation but also by large 2m high solid electric gates. When the gates are open the addition to the building is visible from the lane from where it will be seen as a projection that significantly increases the depth of the original stable block.
 7. The stable building can also be seen from the public right of way that runs in an easterly direction from the field gate between Farnfields Barn and Little Stonehurst Farm. From here it will be viewed in the context of the adjoining dwelling and its large outbuilding. On my site visit I walked up and down this path as far as the trees that line the stream. The tack room projects beyond the rear elevation of the adjoining building (described on the plans as a leisure/games room and farm vehicle store) and therefore represents a minor intrusion into the open countryside. However, its additional depth and almost flat roof make it appear as an incongruous and overly large addition to an otherwise modest stable block which is subservient to the adjacent buildings.
 8. The extension also has three good-sized windows in its rear elevation and a door in its side. These windows together with the door, give the building a domestic appearance. The immediate impression is therefore not of a stable block, but a building that has features in common with, and therefore relates to, the main dwelling further to the north. This is in contrast to the rear elevation of the adjacent building, which is predominantly timber clad and has a more agricultural appearance.
 9. In my view the extension appears to be a bulky addition that is out of proportion with the host building. Furthermore, I consider the size and number of windows means that its external appearance is incompatible with its proposed equestrian use. I consider this to be the case irrespective of the internal arrangements I saw on site and the dispute between the parties about the previous and current use of the extension.
 10. I understand that the existing feed store may be of an inadequate size to provide for four horses. However, there was no substantiated evidence to justify why a tack room of the scale and size within this scheme is required, or why it would need to be significantly larger than the enlarged feed store. Similarly, if a fifth horse were to be accommodated, there was no explanation of how this could be achieved with only four stables. I therefore give these matters little weight in my determination of the appeal.
 11. I appreciate that the appellant has embarked on extensive planting to screen views of his home and the associated outbuildings from the surrounding area. However, the purpose of a landscaping scheme is to integrate development into its context, rather than to obscure otherwise unacceptable development from particular viewpoints.
 12. I therefore conclude that the tack room extension is harmful to the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB. It is contrary to Policy SPO1 of the Wealden Core Strategy and saved Policies EN6, GD2, EN27 and DC12 of the

Wealden Local Plan, which require development to be appropriate in terms of siting, scale and design, including having regard to the cumulative effect of proposals within the AONB. It would therefore not be a sustainable development that would comply with Policy WCS14 of the Core Strategy.

13. The extension also conflicts with the Government's objective of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). In particular paragraph 115 of the Framework requires that great weight should be given to conserving Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
14. For this reason, and having regard to all other relevant matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR