
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 October 2016

by AJ Steen BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/16/3151676

Denver Storage, Okehurst Lane, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9HR

- 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 Andrew Guess against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/15/2436, dated 28 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 8 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'brownfield residential development – erection of 2 x detached new build dwellings following demolition of the existing storage barn; revised application in the alternative to application DC/15/0994 relating to proposed change of use from B8 storage building to four dwellings'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would be considered sustainable development with specific regard to its location in respect to settlements and the countryside.

Reasons

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as development in accordance with the Framework as a whole. This includes approving development proposals that accord with the development plan, including the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), without delay. Sustainable development has three dimensions that must be considered together, being economic, social and environmental.
 4. Although there is some loose knit residential development to either side and a house and nursery to the opposite side of the road, the appeal site is located in open countryside with fields on all sides of the sporadic group of buildings. Billingshurst, the nearest settlement, lies about 1 mile to the south.
 5. The building is located to one side of the site and extends a substantial distance away from the road, with the remainder of this flat site covered in hardstanding or overgrown. It is a low building that, whilst long, is visible only in limited views into and across the site, especially given the substantial planting along the frontage. The building is proposed for demolition and
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replacement with two dwellings and detached garage fronting the road. These would be of a smaller footprint and volume than that of the existing building and would remove the substantial area of hardstanding on the site, but would be taller and, combined with their location to the front of the site, more visible, particularly through the access, as well as introducing other domestic paraphernalia onto the most prominent part of the site.

6. The HDPF seeks to focus development on the town of Horsham and other identified settlements within the district, thereby reducing the need to travel to services and facilities. Outside the built up areas, Policy 26 of the HDPF seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside from inappropriate development, allowing development that is essential to its countryside location and that meet a number of criteria. This reflects paragraph 55 of the NPPF that confirms isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. No information has been provided to suggest that the proposed development would be essential to its countryside location and nor would it comply with the criteria listed in Policy 26 of the HDPF, or fall within the special circumstances listed in paragraph 55 of the NPPF.
7. I note that Policy 2 of the HDPF includes a number of criteria, including encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed and is not of high environmental value. However, the fact that the development would reuse previously developed land in accordance with that criteria would not overcome the harm arising from the location of the site in an isolated location and within the countryside.
8. For these reasons, I conclude that the development would be located away from the nearest settlement and would not be essential to its countryside location. As such, the development is contrary to Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF that seek to direct development toward the settlements within the district and protect the countryside from inappropriate development.
9. Other policies have been referred to concerning development principles, housing provision and the quality of new development. The development would provide dwellings that would contribute toward housing need within the district and the quality of the development would be in accordance with those policies. However, that would not outweigh the harm to the character of the countryside and location away from services and facilities.
10. Reference has been made to other decisions, including within other districts where similar forms of development may have been allowed in areas with restrictive designations, such as the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, I have limited information regarding such schemes and they would be subject to different policies relating to the districts in which they are located. As such, I have considered the scheme before me on its merits.
11. The proposed development would contribute two dwellings toward local housing needs and residents are likely to contribute toward the local community, providing social benefits. There would be limited economic benefits during the construction of the development and future residents may support services and facilities in settlements within the district. The appellant points to the environmental benefit of less traffic with the removal of the commercial use. However, the environmental impact of the proposed development in an isolated

location away from services and facilities and within the countryside would outweigh the identified benefits. As such, the development would not comprise sustainable development and, as a result, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

AJ Steen

INSPECTOR