
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 January 2017

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: 25th January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/16/3160882

Robertsfield Farm, Jib Jacks Hill, Maresfield Road, Hartfield TN7 4HB

- 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 & Mrs Michael King against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2016/0125/F, dated 14 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is a detached building to create rest room with WC and drying room for use of person using equestrian facilities.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

3. The land at Jib Jacks Hill is a field on the outskirts of Hartfield within the High Weald AONB. The site has a barn and field shelter in its north-eastern corner. Planning permission for the erection of a block of three stables and construction of a sand school was granted in 2014¹. This permission has been implemented. However, two further applications for an additional detached building to provide a rest room, WC and shower on the site have subsequently been refused². The current proposal seeks permission for a detached building which would abut the stables and provide a rest room, drying room and WC. To all intents and purposes it would appear to be an extension to the stables.
4. Although the proposal appears to be small scale, it would represent a substantial addition to the stable block. Its width would be greater than the depth of the stable block and it would occupy about half its length. It would have a pitched roof, the ridge of which would project above that of the stable block. It would therefore be disproportionate in scale and size to the existing stables.
5. In addition, the proposal would have two windows in each of the north and west facing elevations. This would give it a semi-domestic appearance which

¹ WD/14/0553/F

² WD/15/0213/F and WD/15/1143/F

- would conflict with the site's sole use for equestrian purposes. In my view the proposal would not integrate effectively with existing development, but would be out of keeping with the existing stables and barn that characterise the site.
6. I accept that the existing development as a whole is well-screened from the road. However, it sits on rising ground and there are extensive views over the open countryside towards the north. The proposal would therefore be in a prominent and sensitive location. Another building would add cumulatively to the amount of development on the site. This would result in an undesirable proliferation and intensification of development that would encroach into the undeveloped countryside of the AONB. The use of materials including oak boarding and felt shingles would not address these fundamental concerns relating to the scale and siting of the proposal.
 7. I appreciate that the owners wish to have somewhere to clean up after caring for their horses. However, as they live just over 150m from the site there is an insufficient justification for providing facilities of the scale proposed. The personal benefits to the appellant are not a reason to set aside harm to the character and appearance of the AONB.
 8. I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB. It would therefore be contrary to saved Policy DC12 of the Wealden Local Plan which requires private and domestic equestrian facilities to be small scale and in keeping with the locality, having particular regard to the cumulative effect of proposals within the AONB. It would also conflict with paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that great weight should be given to conserving AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
 9. For this reason, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR