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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2017

**by AJ Steen BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 30 January 2017**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/16/3157584**

**Garretts Farm, Vinnells Lane, West Meon, Hampshire GU32 1LZ**

- 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 M Edwards against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
  - The application Ref SDNP/15/06343/FUL, dated 25 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 13 May 2016.
  - The development proposed is conversion of existing agricultural buildings into two units of holiday accommodation.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the proposal would constitute sustainable development, with particular reference to:
  - whether the proposed dwelling would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the South Downs National Park, including whether the works required to convert the buildings can be carried out without major reconstruction; and
  - whether there would be a reliance on motor vehicles and whether safe and suitable access would be provided to the proposed development.

### Reasons

3. The Framework 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 Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (CS) and Winchester District Local Plan Review (LP). Sustainable development has three dimensions that must be considered together, being economic, social and environmental.

#### *South Downs National Park*

4. Garretts Farm is located on Vinnells Lane, a narrow country lane that leads up the steep hill from West Meon and past the farm house and buildings that front the road, within the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The yard comprises the house and modest buildings over the access that have been used for farm
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- storage and livestock accommodation. To the rear is a large modern barn that serves the farm.
5. The proposal would result in some of the buildings in the yard being converted to provide two units of holiday accommodation. Policy MTRA 4 of the CS concerning development in the countryside confirms that the reuse of rural buildings for other uses, including tourist accommodation, is acceptable provided that they are of permanent construction and capable of use without major reconstruction. Policies CP19, CP20 and MTRA4 of the CS and Policies CE5 and CE28 of the LP to protect rural character and the distinctive landscape of the SDNP.
  6. The existing development comprises a building that fronts the road and is proposed to remain in storage use for the farm. To the rear is a modest brick building that has been used for livestock accommodation in the past, with a small porch to the front. That would be converted, along with the brick building at a slightly lower level to the rear, into a two bedroom unit of holiday accommodation. The walls would be insulated and clad with timber weather boarding, the roof would be replaced with slate and the porch would be replaced with a brick and flint extension that reflects the appearance of elements of other buildings in the yard. The existing windows and doors would be removed and new windows and doors would be provided of a more domestic scale to the existing. Whilst it is clear from the Structural Engineers report that these buildings are essentially sound and the works can take place without major reconstruction, the result of the number of changes to the external appearance would be a more domestic rather than agricultural appearance to the proposed building.
  7. Beyond those buildings are a mono-pitched brick and blockwork series of buildings that step down the hill to the rear. This would be significantly altered with a new dual pitched roof and the open frontage of the rear section in-filled. I note that the drawings indicate that this section of the building would be "replaced with new cavity wall construction" and that the Structural Engineers Report confirms that the roof would be replaced, along with at least one wall. The appearance of the building would alter considerably and it is clear that the roof and the rear part of the building would be subject of major reconstruction in order to allow the conversion.
  8. The existing buildings have a utilitarian appearance that reflects their historic use for agriculture. The proposed alterations, in particular the number of changes to the unit closest to the road and the change to the shape and appearance of the other unit, would result in a much more domestic appearance to the buildings that would not reflect their historic use or rural location. As a result, it would harm the character of the surrounding landscape within the SDNP.
  9. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed conversion of the buildings would not conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the SDNP. As a result, the proposed development would not comply with Policies CP19, CP20 and MTRA4 of the CS and Policies CE5 and CE28 of the LP.

#### *Transport matters*

10. Vinnells Lane joins High Street on the outskirts of West Meon and visibility along High Street to both sides of the junction is restricted by the alignment of

the road and planting to the northern side, such that additional traffic could adversely affect highway safety. In addition, Vinnells Lane is a narrow road with limited capacity for vehicles to pass.

11. I understand that the amount of farm traffic is likely to reduce given changes to the farming business, including the proposed conversion of these buildings, and Vinnells Lane serves a number of other properties. The amount of traffic associated with the farming business and other development on Vinnells Lane is not clear in comparison to that likely to be generated by the proposed development, and the nature of the farming business could vary again in the future. Consequently, without evidence to the contrary I have to conclude that the amount of new vehicular traffic arising from the proposed development and using the narrow road and junction with High Street would be sufficient to adversely affect highway safety.
12. The site is located a short distance from West Meon and it is linked by a public footpath into the centre of the village, with links to other public footpaths and walking routes. However, the village and other services and facilities are a reasonable distance over the fields, such that occupants of the proposed holiday cottages are likely to rely on their private cars for most trips. Whilst some of the visitors to the holiday cottages would be seeking a walking holiday and may leave their cars at the cottages much of the time, and there is a limited bus service that might serve some visitors for some trips, the majority of visitors are likely to rely on motor vehicles for most journeys.
13. Reference is made to other applications for holiday accommodation in different locations within the SDNP. However, it is unclear whether there were highway safety effects from those developments comparable to those identified in this case and it was clear from the information provided that there was no significant additional traffic likely to be generated by those developments. As such, I consider those cases are not directly comparable to the present case and have assessed this case on its own merits.
14. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would lead to an excessive reliance on motor vehicles and safe and suitable access would not be provided to the proposed development. As such, the proposed development would comply with Policy T2 of the LP and Policy CP10 of the CS and the Framework that seek to reduce demands on the transport network and protect the safety, function and character of the road network.

## **Conclusion**

15. In this case, there would be limited economic benefits during the construction of the development and letting of the cottages would contribute to the economic sustainability of the agricultural business by way of diversification. The proposed development would provide social benefits from the provision of tourism accommodation and providing opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the area. However, the environmental harm resulting from the effect of the conversion of the building to holiday accommodation on the landscape and scenic beauty of the SDNP, the reliance on motor vehicles from the proposed development and the effect on highway safety would outweigh the social, economic and other environmental benefits of the development. As such, the proposal does not constitute sustainable development when considered against policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

16. For the above reasons and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*AJ Steen*

INSPECTOR