
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 January 2017

by Andrew Dawe BSc(Hons) MSc MPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/16/3161097

The Cart Shed, Freeth Farm, Compton Bassett, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 8RD

- 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 J Henly against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/05456/FUL, dated 5 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 20 July 2016.
 - The development is retention of and alterations to holiday let.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - i) whether or not the development is in a suitable location for new build tourist accommodation, having regard to the principles of sustainable development;
 - ii) the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

Sustainability of location

3. Core Policies 1 and 39 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (the Core Strategy) together set out where sustainable development will take place and that outside the Principle Settlements and Market Towns tourist and visitor facilities should be located in or close to Local Service Centres or Large and Small Villages. Core Policy 39 also goes on to set out criteria, all of which is required to be met, whereby exceptions to this, for development away from those centres and villages, can be supported.
 4. The holiday let is located in the open countryside, noticeably detached from the nearest village of Compton Bassett and more so in respect of the larger settlement of Calne. Those distances alone, even to Compton Bassett, via the country lane or even more directly via public footpaths, are likely to be a deterrent to regular pedestrian access to those settlements. Such access is also unlit and, in the case of the lane, without a separate footway. Access via the footpaths is also unlikely to be an attractive option in all weather conditions, given the distance. In any case the village only has very limited
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- services and facilities, including a public house, church and hall thereby offering limited attraction in that respect.
5. Cycling would be possible but again, the general distances, other than to Compton Bassett would likely be a deterrent. The appellant also refers to horseback access to the site but that is unlikely to be a regularly utilised mode for most tourist residents.
 6. I note that there is post office that sells groceries in the slightly wider area but again not in close proximity to the site, and a farm outlet referred to by the appellant at Buttle farm is only stated to sell a limited range of food products.
 7. For these reasons, although there are the immediate farm buildings and a small number of scattered dwellings in the vicinity, the holiday let is in an isolated location within the countryside.
 8. The pubic house in the village is likely to gain some degree of economic benefit from those staying at the holiday let, as would similar establishments in and around Calne, albeit with the more likely use of private motorised transport. However, I have no substantive evidence to indicate that such additional custom from this single unit of accommodation is or would be relied upon in respect of ongoing viability of any of those businesses.
 9. In terms of access to the wider area, including tourist attractions and a greater range and choice of shops, via public transport, the nearest bus stop is in Compton Bassett. That is unlikely to be a generally attractive option in terms of pedestrian access to reach it, for the reasons referred to above. Furthermore, it is an infrequent service even if, as is claimed, buses stop or set down on request at the point of the lane at the end of the access drive.
 10. I note that there is a general need for tourist accommodation in the District. Furthermore, there are popular tourist attractions within the wider area surrounding the site such as at and around Avebury. I also note that there are features nearby associated with the surrounding countryside such as ancient earthworks, including in relation to a medieval watermill, together with the rich wildlife.
 11. However, I have not received any substantive evidence to indicate that those wider attractions are sufficiently close, or those closer features are of such a particular attraction, or so well attended, either individually or together, as to sustain or justify the need for this additional unit of accommodation in an isolated location. It is also therefore unclear as to the extent to which there is demand for guided tours of those nearby features.
 12. I note that the appellant cites support from the Wiltshire Tourist Board and Visit Wiltshire in terms of demand, but have received no substantive documentary evidence in that regard to substantiate this, nor that such demand could not be met through provision in or close to those settlements referred to in Core Policies 1 and 39.
 13. The appellant also refers to the unit being used in conjunction with the farm shoot and other activities. However, I have insufficient substantive evidence of such activities in terms of the extent to which, including the period of time, they benefit from the accommodation concerned.

14. The appellant refers to Neighbourhood Plan objective 8 supporting development of holiday lets on farms. However, I note that the objective only refers to proposals for new bed and breakfasts, guesthouses and conversions, not new build self-catering holiday lets.
15. It is claimed that the accommodation would help support the farm business and allow it to diversify and become more secure in the long term. I acknowledge that the additional income would be a benefit to the appellants in terms of supporting the farm business and conserving the heritage asset that is on their land. However, I have no substantive evidence demonstrating the degree to which the farm's ongoing viability or the conservation work is or would be reliant upon that income. There is likely to be an on-going local economic benefit in terms of providing employment to the staff required to service the accommodation. However, due to the scale of the enterprise, that benefit is likely to be small in terms of the local economy. I have therefore applied little weight to these local economic factors.
16. For the above reasons, I conclude on this issue that the development is not in a suitable location for new build tourist accommodation, having regard to the principles of sustainable development, which outweighs those local economic benefits referred to. As such, it is contrary to Core Policies 1 and 39 of the Core Strategy. It is also contrary to paragraphs 28 and 29 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which relate to supporting sustainable rural tourism and promoting sustainable transport.

Character and appearance

17. The building concerned is of modest size and height, being only single storey. It is also close to other farm buildings and so is seen in the context, albeit on the edge, of that grouping as opposed to encroaching significantly into the open countryside. Furthermore, other than from close up views, it is either screened by those other buildings or local vegetation, seen against the backdrop of those buildings, or at least seen in close proximity alongside them. The timber cladding is not typical of other buildings in the grouping. However, and in part due to the modest size of the building, such cladding does have a softening effect and it would stand out still less conspicuously if dark stained as proposed. Furthermore, those other nearby buildings exhibit varying designs and use of materials such that there is not a high degree of continuity amongst them.
18. The building does have a domestic appearance, including the fairly formal garden and parking area, which contrasts to some degree with the more functional farmyard buildings. However, again, the relatively modest size of the site compared with the complex of farm buildings as a whole, and the factors referred to above, minimise the visual impact.
19. For the above reasons, I conclude on this issue that the development does not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, in respect of this issue, it accords with Core Policies 51 and 57 of the Core Strategy which together require development not to have a harmful impact upon landscape character and to have a high standard of design. It also accords with the Framework in respect of this issue which sets out the requirements for good design in section 7 and for protecting and enhancing valued landscapes in paragraph 109.

Conclusion

20. The Framework sets out that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development and indicates that to achieve that, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.
21. I have found that the development does not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Furthermore, there is the potential for a small biodiversity gain from additional planting within the site along with those small local economic benefits referred to in respect of the first main issue.
22. However, those factors are insufficient to outweigh the harm caused in respect of the development not being in a suitable location for new build tourist accommodation, having regard to the principles of sustainable development. It is therefore not a sustainable form of development.
23. Therefore, for the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Dawe

INSPECTOR