
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2017

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/17/3170681

Land at Lane End, Lyons Road, Slinfold, RH13 0QS

- 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 Mrs Yvonne Ferguson against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/16/2687, dated 23 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is a new stable block and sand school.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have added the words "Land at" to the appeal site address in the banner heading above for clarity.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the stable block and sand school on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is an open field surrounded largely by open countryside which is interspersed by a few residential properties. There is no formal vehicular access to the site currently from Lane End, which is a single track lane. At the site visit I accessed it by foot across open fields.
 5. The proposal before me is for the erection of a new stable block and sand school. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) (HDPF) sets out a general policy of restraint against inappropriate development in the countryside in order to protect its rural character and undeveloped nature. However, it does allow for, amongst other things, quiet, informal recreational use. Policy 29 of the HDPF is also supportive of new equestrian development provided it is appropriate in scale and level of activity, in keeping with its location and surroundings, and, where possible, is well related to existing buildings.
 6. It is clear that a high design standard of building is proposed which would not, in itself, be unattractive. Notwithstanding this, the proposed stables would be substantial. A large 'E' shaped stable building is proposed which would contain 10 loose boxes, feed and hay stores, a tack room and wash down, along with
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two separate yards. This would be larger than would normally be expected for personal/recreational use as the caring of up to 10 horses would be a substantial undertaking. The sand school, in my experience, would also be relatively large for personal use. Nevertheless, even if I were to accept that the stables and sand school were for personal use, acknowledging the appellant's agreement to such a condition on any subsequent planning permission, the scale of development is such that it would result in a significant intrusion and increase in activity in what is currently an undeveloped field.

7. The stables and sand school would be tucked into a corner of the appeal site where there is an existing belt of trees. These would reduce the visual impact of this substantial development along with additional planting. It would not, however, be invisible given the deciduous nature of many of these trees and, in any event, no landscaping can be considered permanent. Furthermore, a more formal access than that which currently exists would be required which would be substantial in length and cut across a further area of open land. Areas of hardstanding around the stables would also likely be necessary, all of which, would be harmful to the rural and undeveloped nature of the area.
8. Finally, the position of the development away from Lane End and the properties along it mean it could not be said to relate well to existing buildings in the area. Whilst there are benefits in providing separation between stabling and residential properties the level of separation proposed in this case would go well beyond this.
9. Taking the above points together the proposed stables and sand school would be contrary to Policies 26 and 29 of the HDPF as they would not be of an appropriate scale and level of activity in this rural location nor would they relate well to existing buildings, all of which would be harmful to the quiet, rural character and undeveloped appearance of the surrounding countryside. I also find conflict with Policies 25 and 33 of the HDPF which, more broadly speaking, seek to protect the District's natural environment.
10. The appeal site does not fall within a designated landscape but this does not reduce the harm to the countryside which I have identified above. Whilst there may be significant equestrian activity in the wider area this was not apparent from the appeal site therefore it does not provide an immediate context. Economic benefits in terms of employment during the construction of the development would be short-term and any ongoing benefits to the rural economy would be limited by the personal nature of the development. This therefore limits the weight I can attach to these.
11. The appellant refers to two examples of, in their opinion, similar schemes, in Pinkhurst Lane and the South Downs National Park. These were, however, for materially smaller stables comprising four and five loose boxes respectively. In any event, each appeal must be determined on its own planning merits.
12. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Hayley Butcher

INSPECTOR