
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 July 2017

by AJ Steen BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 3 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M1710/W/17/3169842

The Ramblers, Bighton Hill, Ropley, Alresford SO24 9SQ

- 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 Ms Isabelle Tillen against the decision of East Hampshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 51992/004, dated 20 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as "the proposal looks to deliver a commercial equestrian enterprise for Livery and Stud competition horses. This includes the demolition of the existing barns on the site which are to be replaced with a stable block, menage and ancillary onsite staff accommodation on the land to the rear of The Ramblers."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed dwelling and commercial equestrian enterprise on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural landscape; and
 - Whether there is an essential need for a dwelling to accommodate a rural worker.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The Ramblers comprises a dwelling adjacent to Bighton Hill, a narrow rural lane in an isolated location away from any settlements. To the rear of the dwelling and alongside the road is an area of open fields in the same ownership as The Ramblers that is currently used for grazing livestock. The fields are located on the side of a hillside, with the neighbouring field rising up away from the site, forming a shallow valley. There are long range views over that neighbouring hill toward further hills in the distance, such that the fields are exposed to long range views.
4. The proposal is for the creation of a long access track from an existing gate to the road that would lead to the proposed commercial equestrian enterprise. That would comprise a stable block, ménage and dwelling for staff

accommodation with associated parking and turning areas, and a large paddock for grazing, but much of the land associated with The Ramblers is outside the appeal site. The built development would be located to the rear of the property, some distance from most existing development either on the site or on neighbouring properties. As a result, the proposed buildings and ménage would appear isolated. This isolation combined with the prominence of the location would adversely affect the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside.

5. A number of small and dilapidated buildings would be removed as part of the development. These are located adjacent to trees such that their size, condition and domination by those trees means that they have very limited effect on the rural landscape. Their appearance contrasts starkly with the prominence and isolation of the more substantial proposed development.
6. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed dwelling and commercial equestrian enterprise would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding rural landscape. As such, it would be contrary to Policy CP29 of the East Hampshire District Joint Core Strategy (CS), Policy C12 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan (Second Review) (LP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that seek to protect the countryside from development other than that which requires a rural location, and seeks exemplary standards of design and architecture that respects the characteristics of the area, including requiring equestrian uses to be sited within an existing group of buildings.

Need for the dwelling

7. The occupant of the proposed dwelling would be employed to provide welfare, safety and security for the Iberian and warmblood competition horses that it is intended to stable at the site. This would include care of stallions, which it is suggested would require 24 hour supervision, although limited information has been provided in support of this assertion or whether remote monitoring has been investigated to provide any necessary care and security. Supporting documents suggest that the business would initially focus on full and DIY liveries. This use would not require accommodation on site, horses within the DIY livery being mostly cared for by their owners.
8. Limited information has been provided as to the financial viability of the business, but I note that it is intended to generate three jobs, including the manager who would live in the proposed dwelling. In addition, the owner would be involved in the business.
9. Policies CP19 of the CS, Policy H14 of the LP and the Framework seek to resist isolated homes in the countryside other than in special circumstances, such as the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work. Policy H14 lists a number of criteria against which proposals should be assessed.
10. These criteria include investigating whether accommodation could be provided in an existing building, or whether there are suitable dwellings in the locality. In this case, the existing dwelling at The Ramblers is located a short distance from the proposed stables. Even if that dwelling would not be in sufficiently close proximity to the proposed stables to provide the specialist care necessary, I have already found the location of the proposed buildings to

adversely affect the character and appearance of the rural area given their isolation. As the proposed dwelling would contribute toward that impact on the landscape, it would be contrary to criterion c and d of Policy H14.

11. For these reasons, I do not consider that a need for the proposed dwelling to house a rural worker has been established. As such, the dwelling would not comply with Policies CP19 of the CS, Policy H14 of the LP or the Framework.

Other matters

12. Reference is made in the appeal documents to the three strands of sustainability referred to in the Framework, being economic, social and environmental. There would be economic benefits to the development during the course of development and following occupation as occupiers would support local services and facilities, including farriers and vets. There would be social benefits in terms of provision of a single dwelling and additional rural employment. However, the conflict with development plan and Framework policies relating to the isolated location of the development and effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area would outweigh those limited social and economic benefits.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would not accord with the development plan. Thus, having had regard to all other matters raised the appeal should be dismissed.

AJ Steen

INSPECTOR