
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 July 2017

by Grahame Gould BA MPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 30th August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/17/3176911

Chates Cottage, Henfield Road, Cowfold RH13 8DU

- 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 J Hawkins against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/16/2719, dated 28 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is general purpose farm building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the development would be appropriately located in the countryside.

Reasons

3. The development would involve the construction of a freestanding, three bay building that would be used to store the appellant's vintage tractors, as well as being used for the storage of hay and straw and to lamb ewes during the late winter and early spring. The building would be 18 metres wide and 9 metres deep and its pitched roof would have a ridge height of 5.2 metres. The building's exterior finishes would comprise concrete blockwork and timber boarding, with a corrugated roof covering. One of the bays would be fully enclosed.
4. The building would be located to the south of Chates Cottage and to the east of an existing barn. The existing barn is currently being used to store timber and some of the appellant's collection of vehicles.
5. The building would be located in the countryside and Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) of 2015 (the HDPF) indicates that the rural character of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Policy 26 further states that new development must be essential to its countryside location and will be permissible when, amongst other things, it would support the needs of agriculture and it would be of a scale appropriate to the countryside's character and its location.
6. While the building has been described as being a 'general purpose farm building' it would be used for the dual purposes of agriculture and the storage

of the appellant's vintage tractors. I recognise that the appellant is a farmer, being a member of a 'farming partnership' and that he farms land at Chates Farm, which exceeds the landholding at Chates Cottage.

7. However, limited evidence has been provided clearly demonstrating that the need for the building would be to primarily support an agricultural enterprise, as opposed to the restoration and storage of vintage tractors. I say that because paragraph 1.4 of the planning statement that accompanied the originally submitted application states 'The proposal is to erect a modest 3 bay general purpose farm building in which to store his tractors. The building has been designed to additionally allow the storage of hay and straw and to lamb ewes in the late winter/early spring'. That text suggests that the use of the building for agricultural purposes would be incidental to the storage of the appellant's collection of tractors. I am therefore not surprised that the Council's advisor has questioned the agricultural need for the building. It is only in connection with the appeal that it has been stated for the appellant that there would be greater agricultural use of the building than was originally submitted.
8. I therefore consider that the available evidence has not demonstrated that a building of the size proposed would clearly come within the category of being development needed to support agriculture.
9. It has been stated for the appellant that the restoration and preservation of tractors is an '... informal and recreational countryside activity' conforming with Policy 26's third criterion, ie being for a 'quiet informal recreational use'. While neither Policy 26 nor its explanatory supporting text clearly explains what uses come within the third criterion, I would be surprised if vehicle restoration was countenanced by this policy as a quiet recreational activity, because I consider it is an activity for which a countryside location is not essential. I appreciate that it would be convenient for the appellant to be able to store and restore his tractors close to his house. However, the available evidence has not demonstrated that the storage or restoration of the tractors could only be undertaken in a building adjoining Chates Cottage or that their storage close to the farm would be essential to the farm's operation.
10. While the existing building is in a poor state of repair, it has not been made clear why its condition could not be improved, as an alternative to the siting of an additional building. I recognise that the new building would be largely screened from view from Henfield Road by the existing hedgerow, however, a public right of way crosses the land to the south of Chates Cottage. There would therefore be some public appreciation of the building, which is a factor that weighs against the development.
11. For the reasons given above I conclude that the available evidence has not demonstrated that the development would be appropriately located in the countryside. I therefore find that there would be unacceptable conflict with Policy 26 of the HDPF.
12. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Grahame Gould

INSPECTOR