



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 January 2018

by S M Holden BSc MSc CEng MICE TPP FCIHT MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22nd January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/17/3181483

Land adjacent to Quabrook Cottage, Colemans Lane, Hartfield TN74HG

- 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 Paul Vigar against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2017/0787/F, dated 3 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is a barn containing stables, tack room and feed and implement store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposed development on:
 - a) the character and appearance of the countryside within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
 - b) highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The B2110 between Colemans Hatch and Forest Row is characterised by scattered development along a rural road that is largely enclosed by mature roadside hedges and trees. The appeal site is part of a 0.58 hectare field adjacent to the east of Quabrook Cottage. This field is bounded by the B2110 on its southern side and Parrock Lane to the east. The site itself lies between two areas of pasture and extends to only 0.07 hectares.
4. The proposal seeks to open up the site by providing a new access onto the B2110 in order to erect a barn to accommodate stables for two horses, along with an associated tack room and feed store. The proposed building would be located towards the rear of the site, would be two storeys in height and have a pitched roof with hipped ends. The hay loft would be reached by an internal ladder and external doors with lifting gear would provide access for the hay. Unlike traditional stables with direct access to the stalls from outside, the two stalls would be accessed from within the building.
5. In my view the proposal would be excessive in scale, bulk and height for this modest-sized site. The proposal would include windows and rooflights that would be more commonly found in a dwelling than a stable. Although it would

be set back from the road and located on lower ground, its size and bulk would still be apparent to anyone travelling along the B2110, adding to the pattern of scattered and sporadic development within this part of the High Weald AONB. The desire of the appellant to enjoy his property does not justify the construction of a building that would be harmful to the appearance of the AONB, which is nationally designated for its landscape and scenic beauty.

6. The new access would require engineering works to accommodate the change of levels between the road and the site. In order to enable vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear, a sufficiently large area of hard-standing would be required to ensure that vehicles could turn around. The building and the associated access and parking/turning area would occupy a significant proportion of the entire appeal site. Together they would introduce urbanising features that would be out of keeping with the rural character of the High Weald AONB. Furthermore, the need to provide appropriate visibility splays would result in the loss of a section of the roadside boundary hedge. This would be detrimental to the appearance of the countryside and would expose the site to direct views from the road.
7. Taking all these factors into account I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the High Weald AONB, which has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. It would therefore be contrary to saved Policies GD2, DC12, EN6 and EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan (Local Plan) which, amongst other things, require development within the High Weald AONB to be appropriate in terms of siting, scale and design in order to conserve or enhance the natural beauty and character of the landscape.

Highway safety

8. The B2110 is a rural road subject to a 50mph speed limit. Notwithstanding the absence of traffic data, my site visit made me aware that it appears to carry a significant volume of fast moving traffic. The proposed access would be close to the junction with Parrock Lane. The highway authority objected to this as there is an access from Parrock Lane into the adjoining field and no justification for creating a new one on a busier road was provided. It also stated that the submitted details failed to demonstrate compliance with its standards in relation to the provision of adequate parking and turning areas on the site.
9. The appellant contends that the proposed access would simply cross highway land and that there would be space on the site for vehicles to turn around. However, whilst the submitted plans gave dimensions, they were small scale and did not provide definitive evidence in the form of swept path analysis. In addition, I was not satisfied that the required visibility splays could be provided within land that is in the appellant's ownership. This combination of factors did not persuade me that the access and parking arrangements would be safe.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be prejudicial to highway safety, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework's objective of ensuring the achievement of safe and suitable access to the site for all people. Although not cited in its decision notice, the proposal would also be contrary to saved Policies TR3 and TR16 of the Local Plan. These policies are referred to in the officer's report and, amongst other things, require the means of access and parking/turning arrangements to meet local planning and highway authority standards.

Conclusion

11. I have found that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the High Weald AONB and would be prejudicial to highway safety. For these reasons, and having regard to all other relevant matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR