



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2018

by Grahame Gould BA MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/17/3181222

Hardham Green House, London Road, Hardham RH20 1LB

- 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 A Mansfield against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/17/00717/FUL, dated 10 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 11 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is erection of stable block, construction of sand school and provision of hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the South Downs National Park (the NP).

Reasons

3. The development would involve the construction of a stable block and a sand school within a field to the east of Hardham Green House, a grade II listed building and another adjoining dwelling, the Garden Flat.
4. The stable block has been designed to accommodate a combination of five horses, ponies and donkeys with ancillary accommodation (areas for the storage of tack, rugs and maintenance equipment, a seating area, a farrier's and vet's area and a wash box). The building would measure 27.66 metres by 14.02 metres and have a maximum height of 7.0 metres¹. The appellant has submitted that she has a competition standard eventing horse, which is stabled off site. The stable block would be used to accommodate that horse, together with a younger competition standard horse to be purchased and horses/ponies for her children. The stable block would be a quite substantial building for the stabling of five horses/ponies/donkeys and its scale would be more akin to a modern farm building. I consider that this stable block would be excessive in scale, given the purpose to which it would be put and its siting in the NP.
5. While the field within which the stable block would be sited of itself has limited landscape value, it is nevertheless free from built development and it exhibits

¹ Dimensions taken from paragraph 5.3 of the appellant's Planning, Design and Access Statement

the openness that characterises this part of the NP. Built development in the surrounding area is quite sparse, with there being some sporadic residential development along London Road/A29 and some farmstead development in the wider area. The Hardham water supply works on Mill Lane being an uncharacteristically larger example of built development in the area, but I presume its scale and location have been dictated by an operational requirement.

6. While the stables have been designed to appear like a farm building, I consider that does not justify a building of this scale within the NP and I am also of the opinion that there would be nothing particularly exceptionable about the building's design. The building would be sited in quite close proximity to the A29 and the deciduous hedgerow marking the boundary between the field and the public highway is quite sparse in places and it would therefore provide limited visual screening for the development. I appreciate that the appellant has recently undertaken additional hedgerow planting to bolster the hedge. However, it is likely that the recent planting would take a considerable period of time to mature and be capable of providing effective screening.
7. While the sand school would occupy an extensive area, it would be a surface level development. I therefore consider that the sand school would have a minimal effect on the character and appearance of the area.
8. I recognise that this development's visual impact on the NP would be very localised. However, the primary purpose for the NP's designation is to '... conserve and enhance the natural beauty ... of the area' and there is a statutory duty to have regard to that purpose. I consider that the NP's valued landscape would neither be conserved nor enhanced by the development and that there would be conflict with the NP's statutory purpose.
9. I consider the appellant's desire to keep her existing horse in close proximity to her home and make provision for the keeping of further horses or ponies in the future is a consideration of insufficient weight to outweigh the harm to the NP's character and appearance. In coming to that conclusion I have had regard to the justification for the development that the appellant has provided in the various letters included as part of her appeal case. The stable block's height in part arises from the appellant's wish for it to be accessible for a tractor. However, meeting that requirement would not appear to be essential for the keeping of horses/ponies/donkeys. The building's height and the presence of the overhead power lines in the field have dictated the building's siting relative to the A29, making it larger and more visible than it might otherwise have to be.
10. I accept that the distance between the stable block and the nearest dwellings would be sufficient for the living conditions of the occupiers of those properties to be unharmed. However, that neutral effect of the development would not outweigh the harm to the NP that I have identified.
11. For the reasons given above I conclude that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the NP. I consider that harm could not be overcome by the imposition of reasonable planning conditions. The development would therefore be contrary to Policies DC2, DC9 and DC29 of the Horsham District General Development Control Policies of 2007. That is because the scale of this equestrian development would

result in an intensification of built development in the countryside and it would not protect and/or conserve and/or enhance the key characteristics of the landscape character area within which it would be located. I also consider that the development would not accord with paragraphs 109 and 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework because it would not conserve the NP's landscape, which has the highest status of protection. I am, however, content that the development's scale and siting would preserve the essentially open setting of Hardham Green House as a listed building.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

Grahame Gould

INSPECTOR