
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 September 2019

by S Dean MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/19/3229205

Land north of Great Stroatley Lodge, Bunch Lane, Haslemere GU27 1AE

- 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 T Humphrey against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2018/2237, dated 14 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is the construction of hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Comments have been made regarding the lawful use of the site and the effect of the surface treatment of the site access on the character and appearance of the area. My consideration of this appeal relates only to the hardstanding within the site as shown on the submitted plan.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a field, described by the appellant as a paddock, surrounded by generally well-established trees, vegetation and fencing, accessed from a narrow lane, opposite an open green area and group of buildings. The lane itself is similarly lined with trees and vegetation, giving the area a rural, generally undeveloped character, despite its proximity to Haslemere and the number of dwellings nearby.
 5. The Haslemere Design Statement (2012) describes this part of Haslemere as a special green area, and part of the Area of Strategic Visual Importance which is protected by the development plan. It states that these green areas are important to the town and its ambience and that as an integral part of the character and intrinsic value of the town, they should be retained.
 6. The hardstanding lies in a band across the width of the site, and was, at the time of my visit, somewhat overgrown in places. Nevertheless, the hardstanding is clearly visible from the road, which is also a public right of way that appears to be well used.
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7. The site now has a developed character and appearance, giving the impression of being in an active use which requires a relatively large, prominent hardstanding, rather than an open field used for occasional parking and access as suggested by the appellant.
8. Although I note that the hardstanding is level with the ground, it has a physical presence which is apparent in views from beyond the site. Whilst there are examples of hardstanding forming accesses in the area, the appeal proposal does not relate to the site access, so it contrasts with those other developments.
9. I consider therefore that the hardstanding changes the character and appearance of the area and that this change is, on balance, harmful to it.
10. The proposal is therefore contrary to adopted Policies RE1, RE3 and TD1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1 (2018). These policies seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, respect, maintain and enhance the character of the landscape and protect the character and amenity of the Borough.
11. It is also contrary to retained Policies D1, D4 and C5 of Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 which promote development that enhances the environment, is appropriate, makes a positive contribution to, maintains and enhances the appearance of an area.

Other Matters

12. The appellant suggests that the appeal scheme finds support in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), notably paragraphs 102, 110 and 117. However, as set out above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan. I do not consider that the content of the Framework regarding the promotion of sustainable transport, the limited suggested improvements to highway safety and the local road network, and the evidence presented to support that claim, outweigh the substantial harm I have found to the character and appearance of the area above.
13. The efficient use of land referred to in Framework paragraph 117 is qualified against the need to safeguard and improve the environment, and I have found above that the proposal does not meet this objective and conflicts with the development plan.
14. Reference has been made by various parties to a potential effect of the proposal on the setting of the Grade II listed Little Stroatley Farmhouse. In light of the separation distance and the nature of the proposal, the proposal is not within the setting of the Listed Building.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Dean

INSPECTOR