



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13th March 2019

by Martin S. Lee, MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/18/3206955

The Old Dairy, Home Farm, Cowfold Road, Coolham, RH13 8QJ

- 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 Harry Woodage against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/18/0783, dated 9 April 2018, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2018.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing Old Dairy building to be replaced with a detached residential dwelling with associated landscape works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. It has been suggested by the appellant that the proposal seeks to extend and convert the existing building. However, based on the submitted plans, the proposal has been considered as a new build residential dwelling. The application description of the proposal reflects this.
3. I consider the reference to Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 (HDPF) in the second refusal reason is in error, as I can find no reference to it in either the Council's Officer Report, the appellant's appeal submission or the Council's appeal submission. I have therefore excluded it from my considerations and have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are (a) whether or not the site represents a suitable location for a dwelling having regard to policies for the location of new housing and (b) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Residential Development in Open Countryside

5. The site lies in open countryside, outside any designated settlement boundary as designated under the HDPF, but adjoins an existing complex of dwellings consisting of former farmyard buildings, converted to residential uses, and the original farmhouse.
6. HDPF Policy 1 sets the primary presumption in favour of sustainable development which reflects the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the

Framework). HDPF Policy 2 provides the key spatial strategy to 2031 of focussing development in and around Horsham and to allow growth elsewhere in accordance with the identified settlement hierarchy to maintain the district's unique rural character. In terms of settlement hierarchy, HDPF Policy 3 states development will be permitted within towns and villages that have defined built-up areas provided it is of an appropriate nature and scale. HDPF Policy 4 provides criteria under which the expansion of settlements beyond existing limits will be supported. These include that the site adjoins an existing settlement boundary and is allocated within the HDPF or a Neighbourhood Plan. The site does not lie within or adjoin the boundary of an existing designated settlement boundary and would therefore be in conflict with these policies.

7. HDPF Policy 26 provides that outside the built-up area, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. The policy requires any proposal must be essential to its countryside location and meet the criteria set out. There is no indication that the proposed development meets the criteria.
8. Accordingly, the proposal, outside a defined built-up area, would conflict with HDPF Policies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 26 which seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations and to maintain the District's unique rural character.

Character and Appearance

9. The appeal site comprises a timber clad and lean-to building and a large modern agricultural building separated by a large expanse of grass predominantly managed as lawn. As previously indicated, it is sited on the periphery of a traditional courtyard complex of residential converted buildings and a farmhouse. The complex of buildings is to the east of the settlement of Coolham, along Cowfold Road. The appeal site and the adjacent complex of converted buildings and farmhouse are framed by surrounding fields and paddocks, clearly separated from the nearby settlement, which gives rise to a distinctive rural character and appearance of sitting within the open countryside.
10. The proposal would result in considerably larger building footprint and massing compared to the existing building on the site. Its L-shaped form would consist of wide gables, a higher ridged roof and dormer window in marked contrast to the more modestly proportioned former agricultural buildings on the adjoining site which have already been converted to residential use. The use of a standing seam zinc for the proposal's roof would provide a distinctly jarring contrast to the typical, red-tiled roofs of the adjoining residential buildings.
11. The site has an existing drive, manoeuvring and parking facilities, and much of its curtilage is laid to lawn. However, the proposed change of use would introduce an increased level of domestication far more visible than the lawn covering in the form of typical domestic clutter and activity associated with (for example) washing lines, garden furniture, children's toys, recreational activity, car parking and vehicle movements. Such additional domestic paraphernalia and activity would detract from the rural context of the site. No detailed landscaping scheme has been presented to demonstrate whether or how the substantial impact of the proposal on the rural landscape could be effectively mitigated.
12. I conclude, therefore, that the proposal as a whole (due to the extent of domestic curtilage proposed, the scale of the existing agricultural barn to be retained)

would be visually harmful to the rural character of the area and would not represent a substantial enhancement of the visual character of the site and setting of the adjoining residential complex and the immediate surrounding area, contrary to Policy 25 (protection of natural environment and landscape character), Policy 26 (protection of countryside, rural character), Policy 32 (quality of design) and Policy 33 (conservation and enhancement of natural and built environment). It would also not accord with the design aims of paragraphs 127 (quality of design and protection of living standards) of the Framework.

Other Matters

13. There is a dispute about whether the Council has a 5 year housing land supply (5YHLS). The proposal would boost housing land supply and would provide a windfall site. The extent of the anticipated provision of such sites in making up the 5YHLS has been questioned by the appellant. However, the harm to the character and appearance of the area would be significant and the contribution of one dwelling to housing land supply would be small. For all these reasons, even with a deficient 5YHLS, the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
14. The emerging review of the HDPF and the potential (as identified in the Council officer report) for the site to be included in a new settlement boundary for Coolham is at far too early a stage to be accorded any weight as a material consideration in the determination of this appeal.
15. There has been some local support for the proposal but it has been found unacceptable for the reasons indicated. In this regard, the effects of the proposal on the longer-term interests of the area have been considered. The proposal would be intended to provide accommodation for a local person. However, there is no mechanism by which this would be secured and, in any case, it would be likely to be unreasonable to impose any personal/local restriction to ensure this. Personal circumstances will seldom outweigh the more general planning considerations as works of a permanent nature will remain long after the personal circumstances have ceased to be material, thus restricting the value of this benefit.
16. The proposal relates to land and buildings which are currently authorised only for agricultural use (regardless of the current domestic character of the maintenance of the site) it does not satisfy any of the key criteria relating to the definition of previously developed land contained in the glossary to the Framework for development.

Conclusion

17. The proposal would result in the benefits of an additional dwelling but this would not make a substantial contribution towards any identified housing land supply shortfall sufficient to outweigh the identified harm to the visual character of the site or its immediate setting and the need to follow a Plan-led system. Accordingly, for the reasons given above, having regard to the development plan when read as a whole, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin S. Lee

INSPECTOR