



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2019

by Alison Partington BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/R4408/W/18/3203411

Land at Edderthorpe Lane, Priest Croft Lane, Darfield, Barnsley S71 5EY

- 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 John Marsden against the decision of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2017/1675, dated 11 December 2017, was refused by notice dated 16 April 2018.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 8 blocks of stables / field shelters.
 - This decision supersedes that issued on 7 May 2019. That decision on the appeal was quashed by order of the High Court.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The stable blocks / field shelters have already been erected on the field and I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. In January 2019, after the application was determined, the Council adopted the *Barnsley Local Plan* (BLP). Policies within this replace the policies from the Barnsley Core Strategy that were referred to in the decision notice. In addition, the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) has also been revised. Both parties have had the opportunity to comment on the revised documents during the appeal process. I have determined the appeal on the basis of the national and local policies as adopted at the present time.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - Whether or not the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the development plan and the Framework, having regard to the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
 - The effect of the proposal on highway safety; and
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate, openness and purposes

5. The appeal site is a field sub-divided by fencing and electric taping to provide paddocks for a number of horses. Each of these has a stable / field shelter located within it which are positioned around the edges of the field. Permission is sought for a total of 8 such structures.
6. The field is located within the Green Belt as defined by the BLP. Policy GB1 of the BLP indicates that land in the Green Belt will be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with national policy.
7. Paragraphs 145 and 146 of the Framework set out the forms of development that are not inappropriate within the Green Belt. These include the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
8. The stables are associated with an existing equestrian use. Such a use is generally considered to be a form of outdoor recreation. The provision of a stables to provide shelter as well as some storage for feed and bedding can reasonably be considered as an appropriate facility for this outdoor recreation use. However, to fall within this exception set out in the Framework, it is necessary to consider whether the stables would preserve the openness of the Green Belt, or conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
9. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. It can be taken as the absence of buildings and development. The area where the stables / shelters are located was formerly open land, devoid of buildings or structures. As such, spatially the appeal scheme has introduced development where previously there was none.
10. Furthermore, the largely open nature of the boundary treatment around the field provides little in the way of screening. As such, the stables are very apparent in views of the field from Edderthorpe Lane, particularly as the field occupies a slightly elevated position in relation to this road.
11. The stables are dotted around the edge of the field. Whilst they vary in design, they are modest in size. Nevertheless, the disparate nature of their positions gives the field a very cluttered appearance. In addition, the variety of materials used in the structures, some of which are poor quality, adds to the appearance of clutter, exacerbating the impact on the openness.
12. Overall, I consider the scheme has an adverse impact, and fails to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
13. One of the purposes of the Green Belt as set out in paragraph 134 of the Framework is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The scattering of the stables across the field, away from the existing built form found at the start of Priest Croft Lane, results in a degree of encroachment of development into the open countryside, albeit that the degree of encroachment is small.
14. Consequently, as the scheme would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, and would be contrary to one of the purposes of including land within it, it

would be inappropriate development. According to paragraph 143 of the Framework inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved in very special circumstances.

Highway Safety

15. The appellant's evidence indicates that the equestrian facilities are used mainly by family members, although some of the paddocks are rented out to local people. As a result, it is stated that traffic movements associated with the use, to and from the site, are limited in number. There is no parking on the appeal site itself, but to the other side of Priest Croft Lane is a farmyard owned and used by the appellant. This includes a large area of hardstanding as well as some agricultural buildings. Although parking spaces are not formally laid out in this area, even allowing for the presence of large farm machinery within the farmyard, there is more than adequate space for a number of vehicles to park and turn. It was clear at my site visit that this is where people who are visiting the field park.
16. Based on the evidence before me, and what I saw on site, subject to a condition to ensure the provision and retention of this space, if I was minded to allow the appeal, I am satisfied that the proposal would be provided with sufficient parking and adequate turning facilities. Therefore, it would not be detrimental to highway safety. Accordingly, there is no conflict with Policy T4 of the BLP which requires that developments provide all transport users within, and surrounding the development, with safe, secure, and convenient access.

Other Considerations

17. The appellant has highlighted that the stables are required for animal welfare reasons and that people would not be willing to keep horses there without them. In addition, it is stated that the number of stables is commensurate with the number of horses kept on the field which is based on the recommended horse/per acre ratio. The ability to provide shelter for the horses is a benefit of the scheme. However, I have not been provided with any evidence to show that it is essential for stabling to be provided on the land on which a horse grazes, rather than elsewhere in the immediate vicinity. As such, the weight I give this benefit is limited.
18. It has been suggested that the scheme benefits the local economy. However, given the small scale nature of the enterprise, and the fact that it is stated that most of the horses are owned by family members, the benefits to the economy will be limited.
19. I observed that there are some other stables in the area and the appellant has argued that the keeping of horses is commonplace within the Green Belt. Nevertheless, this does not justify the scheme, given the harm that I have identified it would cause.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

20. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is harmful by definition. In accordance with paragraph 144 of the Framework, I attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt. Whilst I have concluded that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety an absence of harm in this regard is a neutral matter. Overall, I consider that the benefits cited in the scheme's favour do not clearly outweigh the harm it would

cause. Consequently, very special circumstances do not exist. As a result, the proposal would be contrary to the Framework and Policy GB1 of the BLP.

21. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alison Partington

INSPECTOR