



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2019

by J E Jolly BA (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/19/3235383

Mount Park, High Tor, Bostal Road, Steyning BN44 3PD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs McAlister against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/19/01527/OUT, dated 21 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of one new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether or not the proposal would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the South Downs National Park.

Procedural Matters

3. For the purpose of clarity, the Council have confirmed the South Downs Local Plan (SDLP) was adopted in July 2019 and supersedes Policy DC1 of the Horsham District General Development Control Policies 2007, and Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy 2007 and has therefore, full weight for the purposes of decision making. I have proceeded on this basis.
4. The information submitted includes drawings such as elevations, floor plans and 3D images of the proposal. I have regarded all of these as indicative drawings except for matters relating to access. As such, the appearance of the proposal, including landscaping, should be considered as a 'reserved matter' for a later date.

Reasons

Landscape and scenic beauty of the South Downs National Park

5. The appeal site is located on the upper slopes of a former chalk pit just beyond the settlement of Steyning and within the confines of the South Downs National Park. The site has vehicular access from Bostal Road and can be found up a steep, grassed track as part of Mount Park residential caravan site. The caravan park has dwellings arranged around a cul-de-sac type arrangement to the floor of the former pit and is surrounded by mature woodland and the open fields beyond.

6. The outline proposal is for a two-storey, 4-bedroom dwelling with parking that would be sited on a raised plot of open land that overlooks the brick and tile dwellings, 'High Tor' and 'Mount House' at the mobile home park entrance, and towards Steyning and the open countryside beyond.
7. The main parties agree that the proposed dwelling is located outside a settlement boundary, and that given the proximity of Steyning and neighbouring dwellings it cannot be considered as an isolated dwelling. Indeed, the proposal would be accessible to the day to day services and transport links offered in Steyning. Moreover, the proposal would likely offer some short-term economic and social benefits such as employment associated with the construction, patronage of local services, and the benefits associated with the provision of one new dwelling.
8. However, from the evidence before me the proposed residential dwelling would not be linked to the needs of the countryside, for example, the pursuit of forestry or agriculture. Rather, it would generate a range of domestic activities beyond the existing informal recreational use of the site such as, but not limited to, parking, washing lines, garden furniture and other domestic paraphernalia.
9. As such, in this unique location, I can find no exceptional circumstances that contribute to the needs of the countryside or wider requirements of sustainable development in rural areas, including any flexibility related to the development plan as a whole. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to Policy SD25 of the SDLP which says that development will only be permitted outside settlement boundaries where there is an essential need for a countryside location.
10. I give some limited weight to the potential 'fall-back' position for the erection of an additional mobile home under permitted development rights. However, as indicated on the application form and from the 'facts on the ground', the appeal site is vacant open land with a proposal for a prominent two-storey dwelling of a very different character and nature to the mobile home permissible in its place. Indeed, the high visibility of the proposal and its range of domestic activities in this elevated location, despite some existing hedging and trees, would fail to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the South Downs National Park.
11. Moreover, whether or not the mobile homes and other dwellings are appropriate development in this location, it is unclear to me whether this has been built under an earlier development plan policy and I do not have the full details of how these examples arose. In any case I have considered the proposed development on the basis of its own planning merits.
12. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to Policies SD4 and SD25 of the SDLP which say development must be informed by landscape character, reflecting the context and type of landscape in which the development is located and conserves and enhances the special qualities of the National Park.
13. Furthermore, as part of the required assessment set out in Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) I have found no exceptional circumstances for development in this location, have no evidence to suggest that the cost would be prohibitive outside this appeal site, and have found harm to the landscape as set out above.

14. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to Paragraph 172 of the Framework which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and states that planning permission should be refused other than in exceptional circumstances of which I have found none.

Conclusion

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

J E JOLLY

INSPECTOR