
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 July 2020

by J Gibson BUEP MPIA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V3310/W/20/3247115

Land off Middle Stoughton Road, Middle Stoughton, Wedmore, Somerset BS28 4PT

- 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 Lathwell against the decision of Sedgemoor District Council.
 - The application Ref 50/19/00123, dated 25 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is for the change of use of land to Equestrian, erection of stables and alterations to field access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The address for the appeal site has been inconsistently described by both parties across the various documents submitted. The address in the above heading has been simplified using the collective details provided by both parties and verified by my observations during the site visit.
3. The above description has been taken from the submitted appeal form and the Council's decision notice. This description more clearly and succinctly describes the appeal proposal than that on the application form. The appeal has been determined on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed development would be acceptable having regard to local planning policies for development in the countryside.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is an open field located off the bend of Middle Stoughton Road, to the west of land fronting Middle Stoughton Lane. The site and surrounding area are rural in character comprising predominantly of open fields with densely vegetated boundaries and sporadic clusters of development beyond the appeal site. The site is not located within any defined settlement boundaries under the Sedgemoor Local Plan (LP) (adopted February 2019) and would therefore constitute development in the countryside.
6. The proposed use of the appeal site for the purposes of keeping horses for personal use is not inherently incompatible with the countryside location of the

appeal site. However, Policy CO1 of the LP seeks to limit the pattern of growth of new development in countryside locations to those which have a demonstrated need, enhance the environment, are essential in that location or more sustainable. Policy D13 of the LP concurrently reinforces the importance of new development being appropriately located to reduce dependency on private vehicles, journey lengths and frequency, and promote more sustainable modes of transport.

7. The appellant does not live within the local area and there are no existing equestrian buildings or use on the appeal site. It is therefore unclear what the specific need for the proposed development to be located on the appeal site is, and there are valid concerns regarding the likely journey lengths, types and frequency required to support the keeping of horses on this site for personal use. Whilst I note the appellant's intention to move to the area, I cannot be certain in planning terms of where the appellant may reside in relation to the proposed development or when, if at all, and consequently what level of harm any journeys to the appeal site may generate from a sustainability perspective.
8. Conditions could be imposed to ensure appropriate levels of environmental enhancement occur as part of the proposed development. However, this would equate to a neutral outcome as a matter of compliance with the LP policies and would not therefore weigh in favour of the proposal. The suggested economic benefits raised by the appellant are noted but warrant limited weight, as this is largely subject to the relocation of the appellant to the area which cannot be relied upon to grant planning permission in this case.
9. The Council refer to Policy D19 of the LP in their reason for refusal, which relates to the protection of local landscape character from the significant adverse impacts of development. I do not share the Council's view that the proposed equestrian use or stable is of a scale or design which would equate to significant adverse harm to the landscape character of the area. The proposal would not look out of place within this countryside location and would be well screened by existing and proposed vegetation. Notwithstanding my conclusion on Policy D19, this does not outweigh the conflict identified with Policies CO1 and D13 of the LP.
10. Accordingly, I am not satisfied that the proposed equestrian use and associated stables would be acceptable development in the countryside, or that the proposal supports sustainable travel patterns and movements to the appeal site as per the local planning policies. It therefore conflicts with Policies CO1 and D13 of the Sedgemoor LP.

Conclusion

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

J Gibson

INSPECTOR