



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2020

by S M Holden BSc(Hons) MSc CEng MICE CTPP FCIHT MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 06 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/20/3246893

Land north of Jackrells Lane, Southwater RH13 9DH

- 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 Roland Standley of Bourne Hill Stables against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/0326, dated 30 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is a new build agricultural barn to provide storage for machinery required to maintain the plots of land.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the barn on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a large, open flat field on the north side of Jackrells Lane opposite the entrance to the Raylands Caravan Park. The proposed barn is needed to support equestrian activities on the appeal site and an adjacent field which together have an area of 23.5ha. During the summer months these fields will be used for grazing foals and yearlings. During the rest of the year the grass will be grown for hay. The barn would provide storage for machinery for harvesting and space for storing hay bales. The hay would provide feed for up to 45 horses both on the site and at Bourne Hill Stables, an equestrian business which operates from a site on Kerves Lane employing 10 people.
4. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) states that a countryside location must be essential for any proposal outside built-up area boundaries to be justified. The proposal satisfies this requirement. Policy 29 of the HDPF recognises the importance of equestrian related development to the rural economy. The Council's Agricultural Consultant has confirmed that the size of the barn is justified by the scale of the associated business.
5. The grazing area of the field is enclosed by a post and rail fence and its outer boundaries are predominantly marked by hedges and mature trees. There is a line of especially fine trees on the western boundary, adjacent to which is an exercise area associated with the caravan park. Even though the area is affected by traffic noise from the nearby A24, it still has a sense of remoteness, tranquillity and undeveloped character. In particular there is a notable absence of buildings in the area to the north of Jackrells Lane.

6. In this context the introduction of a barn of the size and scale proposed would appear intrusive in this open, flat and undeveloped landscape. It would be highly visible from the road and especially from the section of Jackrells Lane which runs parallel to the field's western boundary. The barn's utilitarian appearance, corrugated roof, metal folding seam clad facade and large roller shutter doors would serve to emphasise its size and bulk. In addition, the proposal would require a new entrance track, turning area, hardstanding and parking for staff which would be alien, incongruous and urbanising features within this verdant rural setting.
7. It is accepted that there are no existing buildings on the appeal site or the associated field which would meet the identified needs. The site is also well related to the bridleway network. However, the barn would be some distance from the business for which it is required. It would therefore appear isolated, unduly prominent and incompatible with its setting. The hedges around the field would not provide adequate screening from Jackrells Lane or the public rights of way within the vicinity. The barn would therefore not be in keeping with its location or surroundings, as required by Policy 29 of the HDPF.
8. Taking all these factors into consideration, I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the countryside. It would conflict with Policies 25(1), 26, 29, 32 and 33 of the HDPF, which seek to protect and conserve the District's landscape and ensure that development integrates effectively with its surroundings.

Other Considerations

9. The proposal would form part of an ongoing equestrian enterprise which employs a small number of local people. The improved security and storage offered by an enclosed barn would protect the investment made in the machinery. These are factors in the scheme's favour. However, in the absence of substantive evidence to relate these benefits to the siting of the appeal proposal, they carry limited weight in the planning balance.

Conclusions

10. The proposal conflicts with the development plan arising from its harmful effects on the rural landscape. The benefits that would accrue to the rural economy and the equestrian business for which the barn is needed would not outweigh the permanent harm to the countryside.
11. For this reason, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR