
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 December 2020

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B9506/W/20/3258287

Cottage Fields, South Sway Lane, Sway SO41 6DA

- 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 and Mrs A Oakhill against the decision of New Forest National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 20/00003, dated 17 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 28 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as erection of agricultural storage barn.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the landscape of the New Forest National Park (the National Park).

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within the National Park, within which there is a duty to have regard to the statutory purposes of the designation, which include the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework further indicates that great weight should be given to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty within National Parks.
4. In support of the above objectives, the Local Plan 2016-2036 (the Local Plan) includes a number of policies which govern and limit development within the landscape of the National Park. Two of these policies have been cited in relation to the scheme. The first, Policy DP52, relates to field shelters and stables. As such, it is not directly relevant, given that regardless of whether a broad connection exists between equine activities and some of the proposed uses of the building, the proposed building is not a field shelter or stable.
5. The Guidelines for Horse-Related Development Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD) provides little other guidance of direct relevance. Indeed, insofar as the SPD makes reference to other types of building in relation to equine activity, this is in the context of large commercial developments.
6. The second of the Local Plan policies cited, Policy DP50, relates to buildings required for agricultural purposes. It therefore clearly has direct relevance given that the proposed building is described as 'agricultural' on the application

form, and a use in connection with agricultural activity is proposed. As the building would not however be solely used for agricultural purposes, it would not serve a solely agricultural requirement. That being so, whether or not the appellant could demonstrate a functional need and justification for an agricultural building, the development would, by definition, conflict with the policy.

7. Here the appellants have confirmed that a more general storage building is in fact proposed. In other words, the building would provide for the mixed storage needs of the appellants. In the absence of Local Plan policies which clearly support developments of this type, the Authority's concern is the effect that the development would have on the landscape of the National Park.
8. The site of the proposed building currently contains a timber field shelter and a storage container, each of modest size. These occupy a locally prominent position, from which ground levels fall, particularly towards the east. On this side the setting is predominantly open, consisting of paddocks. Further paddocks/fields lie beyond a belt of trees on the western side. Notwithstanding the presence of an existing dwelling immediately towards the north west, the landscape setting is strongly rural.
9. A combination of openness, the site's prominent position and the sparseness of intervening vegetation, means that the field shelter and container can be easily viewed from South Sway Lane, which lies towards the east, at most points between its junction with the B3055, and the site access. Though the storage container appears somewhat incongruous, the field shelter is one of many such buildings apparent within the surrounding setting. Indeed, subject to the terms of Policy DP52 as noted above, it is a type of structure that the Local Plan generally considers to be acceptable within the landscape of the National Park.
10. The proposed building would be significantly larger than the existing field shelter and container combined, representing a considerable increase in the overall scale and mass of built form on the site. Unlike the existing field shelter, its appearance would be industrial in character, featuring fully enclosed metal clad construction, and a roller door. The size, industrial appearance and prominence of the building would cause it to be visually conspicuous and intrusive within its landscape setting.
11. The above would remain true even if the building was camouflaged with paint, given that the extent of any backdrop would be limited by the prominent positioning of the building.
12. Planting has occurred along the boundary with South Sway Lane. Assuming that such planting thrives, it would take some time for it to reach a height sufficient to fully screen the building from the road. Even then, the long term presence and effectiveness of the screening would be uncertain, and the building would remain exposed in other directions. The size and obtrusive appearance of the building would give rise to an additional source of conflict with Policy DP50 of the Local Plan, and would clearly not conserve or enhance the landscape of the National Park.
13. The existence of other metal clad buildings within the National Park, including one along Pitmore Lane, has been drawn to my attention. The Authority has also confirmed that it has approved the construction of such buildings in the past. The specific details and circumstances of each case have not been set

before me. However, the nature and sensitivity of individual sites clearly varies, and large metal-clad buildings are not otherwise a characteristic feature of the landscape of the National Park at large. The existence of other metal clad buildings, as too any harm that these may cause, does not therefore justify the harm that would be caused in the current case.

14. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the landscape of the National Park. It would thus conflict with the Local Plan, which seeks to restrict such development, including through Policy DP50, as detailed above.

Conclusion

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

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR