
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 February 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W1715/W/20/3262351

**Land adjacent to Grange Road, Netley, Southampton, Hampshire
SO31 8GD**

- 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 Martin Back against the decision of Eastleigh Borough Council.
 - The application Ref F/20/88060, dated 9 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is enlarged stables/haystore.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I note that the planning application was submitted part retrospectively, and on my site inspection I observed that the appeal scheme has been implemented. I have dealt with the appeal accordingly.
3. Prior to determining the appeal, I sought clarification from the parties in respect of the details of the stable building approved under planning permission Ref F/6/56013. The Council confirmed that drawings D01RevB titled 'Plan Elevations' and D02RevB titled 'Block Plan Perspective' comprise the approved plans. I have dealt with the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies on the west side of Grange Road, in open countryside outside the urban edge, and within a strategic gap, as designated in the *Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review 2001–2011* (2009) (the LPR).
6. The site is used for equestrian purposes. In addition to the building which is the subject of this appeal, there is a detached, pitched roof timber hay barn on the site. Both buildings are positioned close to the road frontage. Vehicular access is from Grange Road, and there is an area of on-site hard-surfacing adjacent to the entrance and the buildings. The remainder of the site is laid to grass/paddock, with a freestanding stable building sited near the rear of the

- site. Post and rail fencing separates the frontage built development from the paddock area.
7. The appeal site is surrounded by open countryside fields to the rear and side, and much of the boundary is defined by mature hedging. Notwithstanding some sporadic employment and residential built development on the opposite side of Grange Road, the immediate locality is predominantly rural in character and appearance.
 8. The evidence before me is that the stable block was approved in 2006, under planning permission Ref F/6/56013, and that the building was completed. This comprised a single storey structure incorporating 5 stables. The building had a simple, functional appearance, comprising timber boarding walls under a low, tiled hipped roof. As such, I find that it had a rural appearance, and that its design and size would have been entirely in keeping with the equestrian use of the site, and the countryside character of the surrounding area. It would not have appeared incongruous or over-dominant within this countryside setting, notwithstanding its prominent position close to the road frontage, and it would have sat comfortably in relation to the hay barn which was subsequently built beside it.
 9. The appeal scheme, whilst retaining the approved building footprint, has provided an additional level of floor space within the roof, to accommodate a hay loft. It has significantly altered the appearance of the building and resulted in a notable increase in its height and massing. The approved shallow, fully hipped roof has been replaced by a much deeper and bulkier half-hipped structure with a higher ridge height. The increased roof size is magnified by the incorporation of a long box dormer which extends along the majority of the length of the west-facing roof slope, occupying a considerable amount of the roof slope.
 10. Attention is further drawn to the increase in roof size by the presence of a number of first floor windows in the rear and both side elevations, and a floor-to-ceiling height opening in the dormer window. These fenestration openings are considerably larger than those approved at ground floor level below them, in association with the stables, and this contributes to the top-heavy appearance of the enlarged roof form.
 11. I also find that, cumulatively, these alterations and additions result in the building having acquired a more residential appearance. The box dormer and first floor windows are distinctly domestic in character, having regard to their size, proportions and positioning, and are not typical of the style of fenestration usually associated with stables and hay stores.
 12. The appeal scheme has resulted in a physical and visual diminishing of the strategic gap as a result of the increase in building size. The building, as altered, occupies a visually prominent position close to the site frontage, where the enlarged building and more domestic design, is readily apparent, particularly when approaching the site from the south along Grange Road, from where the increased building mass partly obscures views of the adjacent hay barn building. The flat and largely open nature of the appeal site and surrounding countryside also contribute to the extended building assuming a noticeable visual presence within the strategic gap.

13. The enlarged building appears visually at odds with its rural setting, within an equestrian site, in close proximity to a hay barn and surrounded by open fields. As such, due to its combined size and design, the appeal scheme has had an urbanising effect on the appeal site, to the detriment of its open rural character.
14. This urbanising impact is potentially exacerbated by an increase in light pollution arising from the significant increase in glazing at first floor level, compared to the approved scheme which contained no roof level fenestration. As such, this would further erode the intrinsic landscape character of this part of the strategic gap.
15. I am not persuaded that the presence of the adjacent hay barn of a size which is greater than that of the enlargement to the stable building, provides justification for the appeal scheme. I find that the hay barn is of a scale and functional design which does not appear at odds with the equestrian use of the site. Neither does the existence of employment buildings on the opposite side of the road diminish the aforementioned harm I have identified. I must determine this appeal on the basis of the current site circumstances and relevant Development Plan policies.
16. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal does not accord with the aims of Saved Policies 2.CO, 11.CO, 18.CO, 59.BE and 154.OS of the LPR, and Emerging Policies S1, S7, S8, DM1, DM18 and DM36 of the *Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036* (2018).
17. These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development comprises good design which takes account of the context of the site and respects the intrinsic landscape character and appearance of the countryside, that extensions to non-residential buildings in the countryside do not have an unacceptable physical or visual impact on the countryside or urbanising effect in terms of scale, massing and height, and that development does not physically or visually diminish strategic gaps/countryside gaps.
18. For similar reasons, the appeal scheme would be contrary to Chapters 12 and 15 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (the Framework), which, respectively, require well-designed places and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

Other Matters

19. Notwithstanding that the Framework encourages Local Planning Authorities to approach decisions in a positive and creative way, this is not unqualified, and would not address, or outweigh, the aforementioned harm that I have identified in respect of the main issue.
20. The appellant has drawn my attention to satellite imagery dating back to April 2007, which appears to indicate the presence of a small dormer window on the west elevation of the stable building at that time, and which the appellant considers to be lawful on this basis. Notwithstanding that the satellite image does not appear to confirm the existence of a box dormer at that time, I have no evidence before me that a formal application for a certificate of lawfulness with respect to a dormer has been determined by the Council prior to the appeal planning application.

21. It is not for me, under a section 78 appeal, to determine whether or not a dormer was previously lawfully added to the west elevation of the stable block. To that end, it is open to the appellant to apply for a determination under sections 191/192 of the Act, and my determination of this appeal under section 78 does not affect the issuing of a determination under section 191/192 regardless of the outcome of this appeal. As such, I have determined this appeal having regard to the stable building approved under permission Ref F/6/56013 and the current appeal scheme.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR