
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 June 2021

by C Osgathorp BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L3815/W/21/3267356

Sparrwood Farm, Dunsfold Road, Plaistow, West Sussex RH14 0QF

- 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 & Mrs Andrew & Caroline Tilley against the decision of Chichester District Council.
 - The application Ref PS/20/01448/FUL, dated 3 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is an agricultural barn.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council has drawn my attention to a recent appeal decision¹ relating to nearby land to the north-west, and I have invited comments from the appellant. Whilst I have had regard to this appeal decision, I have considered the proposal before me on its own merits.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the proposal is justified in this location and the effect on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

4. Policies 2 and 45 of the Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014 – 2029 (the Local Plan) set out the development strategy relating to the location of new development in the countryside. Policy 2 states that development in the 'Rest of the Plan Area: Small villages, hamlets, scattered development and countryside' is restricted to that which requires a countryside location or meets an essential local rural need or supports rural diversification.
5. Local Plan Policy 45 states that within the countryside, development will be granted where it requires a countryside location and meets the essential, small scale, and local need which cannot be met within or immediately adjacent to existing settlements. Planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that: 1) the proposal is well related to an existing farmstead or group of buildings, or located close to an established settlement; and, 2) the proposal is complementary to and does not prejudice any viable agricultural operations on a farm and other existing viable uses; and 3) proposals requiring

¹ Appeal reference: APP/L3815/W/20/3271133

- a countryside setting ensure that their scale, siting, design and materials would have minimal impact on the landscape and rural character of the area.
6. The appeal site is located outside any settlement boundary and is therefore in the countryside for planning purposes. It comprises a small parcel of agricultural land, measuring approximately 3.4 hectares. The information before me indicates that the appeal site is within a wider area of fields and woodland that once formed part of the agricultural holding of Sparrwood Farm but has now been sold into smaller lots under different ownership. The appeal site currently contains a small stable building and a corrugated structure, which the appellant indicates would be replaced by the proposal.
 7. The proposed agricultural barn would have a footprint measuring around 120 square metres. The appellant's Agricultural Justification Statement² comments that the building would be used for the storage of hay and feed; secure storage of agricultural tools and equipment; secure storage of veterinary and welfare supplies; lambing and stabling when weather conditions are inclement; animal handling facility for the welfare of sick and young animals; and as a safe and secure area for livestock handling.
 8. The appellant states that they farm approximately 32 hectares of agricultural land, which is dispersed between a number of small local farms, including Hook House & Shoppe Hill; Church Green House; Church Close Farm; Hunterswood Farm; Tismans Common; and Sparrwood Farm. This consists of pastureland predominantly used to produce hay, and for the grazing of sheep. The appellant states that their current flock consists of 53 sheep and they also keep 3 horses. In addition, the appellant intends to expand by starting a small herd of cattle. Based on the information before me, it seems that the proposed building is intended to accommodate the agricultural need associated with farming of the appeal site and the wider land.
 9. The evidence indicates that only the appeal site at Sparrwood Farm is owned by the appellant and they have informal agreements with landowners to farm the wider land. Whilst the evidence indicates that the appellants have farmed the wider land for a number of years, the informal nature of the lease agreements means that there is little certainty of the duration that the appellants can farm that land. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated whether there are any existing buildings at or near to the other farms that could be used to accommodate the agricultural needs of the business.
 10. On the basis of the evidence before me, the farming of parcels of land in the wider area would not justify the size and scale of the proposed building, which would be significantly larger than the existing buildings and disproportionate to the size of the appeal site. The proposed building would be in an isolated position away from a settlement, and it would not be well related to an existing farmstead or group of buildings.
 11. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not be justified in this location and would therefore be contrary to Policies 2 and 45 of the Local Plan, the aims of which are set out above.

² Prepared by Batcheller Monkhouse

Character and appearance

12. The local landscape consists of open fields bordered by hedgerows and adjoined by ancient woodland. I have had regard to the appellant's Landscape and Visual Appraisal Report³, which highlights that the proposed agricultural barn would be sited adjacent to an area of woodland (not ancient), and long views of the building would be restricted by the surrounding woodlands. Furthermore, I appreciate that the use of timber cladding would soften the appearance of the proposed building to some extent.
13. The landscape is largely undeveloped, and I saw that any buildings in the vicinity are modest and of small-scale, primarily to keep horses. By contrast, the size and scale of the proposed building would be much larger. It would be isolated from any existing buildings and would appear visually intrusive and incompatible with its landscape setting. Furthermore, the provision of a large area of hard surfacing would appear as an incongruous and urbanising feature in this rural landscape.
14. I note that in some points in the adjacent public right of way to the south-east (No 621) there would be minimal views of the proposed building due to the topography of the land, particularly to the north-east where the land rises. Nevertheless, the proposed building would be visible along the public right of way. I saw that new planting has been carried out along the edge of the public right of way, which would be of some benefit. However, this would take time to become established and given that it is a natural feature it cannot be relied upon in perpetuity to screen the development.
15. Regarding the public footpath to the north-west (No 636), the existing hedgerow would provide screening of the proposed building and I appreciate that this has been supplemented in some places by new planting. However, the extent of screening would be reduced during months when vegetation is not in leaf and it would not adequately mitigate the visual impact that would arise from the scale of the proposed building.
16. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. It would therefore conflict with Policies 45 and 48 of the Local Plan, which, amongst other things, require development proposals to protect the tranquil and rural character of the area; and recognise distinctive local landscape character, and sensitively contribute to its setting and quality. The proposal would also be contrary to paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which requires decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Planning balance and conclusion

17. Paragraph 83 of the Framework states that planning decisions should enable: the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; and, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Paragraph 84 also recognises that it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings. The proposed development would support the growth of an agricultural business and provide

³ Prepared by Sarah Sullivan BA(Hons), DipBLDGCons(RICS)

security and storage for agricultural items and machinery. It would also provide a covered space for lambing and animal welfare. These factors weigh in the scheme's favour. In addition, I have had regard to the letters of support from interested parties.

18. Nevertheless, I have found that the farming of parcels of land in the wider area would not justify the size and scale of the proposed building, which would be significantly larger than the existing buildings and disproportionate to the size of the appeal site. The proposed building would be in an isolated position away from a settlement, and it would not be well related to an existing farmstead or group of buildings. The size and scale of the building would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
19. I conclude that the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the adverse effects that I have identified. The proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding.
20. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

C Osgathorp

INSPECTOR