



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 28 April 2021

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 JULY 2021

Ref: APP/Z3825/W/21/3268550

Priory Fields Barn, Storrington, RH20 4LN

- 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 Philip Orpwood of Norbertine Order against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/20/2250, dated 13 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is Sussex style barn for storage of agricultural equipment and use by volunteers.
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Decision

1. This appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There are other appeals made by the appellant on nearby sites. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined these appeals on their individual merits. Furthermore, the fact that development has occurred has had no bearing on my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is part of an open, largely undeveloped field which is laid to grass with numerous trees. This field is adjoined to the side and rear by mainly open land and woodland. There is residential development along Kithurst Lane and to the north. However, given the rural character of the appeal site and its separation from Kithurst Lane due to the landscaped boundary, it relates more closely to the surrounding countryside land. Priory Fields makes a positive contribution to this rural setting. Development nearby has been approved including a three storey block of flats and 9m high retail unit and clinic, although there is no evidence that these would result in a change to the character of this surrounding countryside.
5. The barn includes rooflights and a leaded style of window in the elevations labelled east and west. This fenestration and the number of windows proposed are typically domestic in their character and appearance. The design would therefore result in a residential appearance to the building. It is important that development should 'belong' to its setting rather than be discordant by providing mixed signals as to its function. The resultant design would be urban

and so would harmfully erode the important countryside character of the land which, in turn, would have a negative effect on the wider surroundings.

6. The windows would provide natural light into the barn and allow views across parts of Matt's Wood and Kithurst Field. Whilst I appreciate that this is pleasing for those volunteering, I am not persuaded that such visibility is necessary in order to properly maintain the land. Nor that artificial lighting could not be used. As such these benefits attract limited weight in this decision.
7. The barn would be highly visible when accessing Matt's Wood and the cemetery. Although this land is privately owned it is currently accessible to the public. Additional planting may reduce this visibility, although views would still be possible along the access to Priory Fields. Therefore I am not satisfied that landscaping would screen this jarring domestic appearance. As such, this harm would be experienced.
8. There is no dispute in relation to the heritage effects or the effects on the National Park. The conservation officers and the South Downs National Park have also not objected to the proposed scheme. There is no evidence that the proposed development would result in a harmful level of light pollution as a result of the windows. However, the lack of harm in these regards is a neutral factor which does not weigh in favour of the development.
9. Consequently, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Therefore, in this respect, it would be contrary to Policies 10, 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework November 2015 and Policy 14 of the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan which together seek to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the borough and the undeveloped nature of the countryside, including rural economic development, as well as setting criteria to achieve high quality design for new development including a sympathetic relationship with the surroundings.

Other Matters

10. The appellant makes reference to other applications he has made that have been refused and allowed at appeal (Prior Close and Fern Road). However, it is not apparent how these decisions might alter my conclusions on the main issue above.
11. The appellant is seeking to increase planting on and near the appeal site and has improved the soil, is providing public access to these areas at Matt's Wood and is providing funding for this. These objectives are admirable. There is no dispute in relation to the proposed use in a countryside location.
12. As the proposed development is not for housing, the government's target to significantly boost the supply of homes would not be relevant to this appeal. The appellant states that this would represent the best use of land, however I find it to be harmful for the reasons set out above, contrary to the development plan.
13. While I have noted the appellant's concerns regarding the Council's handling of the planning application and its previous performance, that does not alter my assessment of the planning merits of the proposal.

Conclusion

14. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR