
Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 29 June 2021

by Martin Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/21/3270653

Land on northwest side of Ram Alley, Ashford Hill, Thatcham RG19 8AY

- 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 Mrs Jenny Redhead against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02423/FUL, dated 1 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as "Erection of a dwelling. Repositioning of stables' tack room, feed store, hay store and riding arena approved under 19/01740/FUL".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the appeal was submitted the Government has published a new National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Comments were sought from the Council and the Appellant. As the main parties have had the opportunity to provide comments no injustice has been caused. I have considered the appeal on the basis of the revised Framework.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site is rectangular in shape and located along an unsurfaced track known as Ram Alley. There is an existing surfaced access to the site and substantial gates. The land appears to comprise a number of paddocks used for grazing. It sits within an expansive rural landscape and has a distinct countryside appearance. There are a number of complexes of buildings nearby, however the appeal site sits apart from these and there is little, if any, visual connection with nearby built form. These complexes of buildings are well-spaced along Ram Alley, with large swathes between, reinforcing a relatively open, rural character.
5. The appeal proposal would introduce a new dwelling into the site, occupying part of a gap between two relatively substantial, and well-spaced, groupings of buildings. In this respect, notwithstanding the conclusions of the submitted Landscape Visual Appraisal, it would erode the rural aspect of the site and its surroundings, appearing as an intrusive and discordant addition, with a

consequential substantial harmful effect. I accept that there has previously been permission granted for the erection of equestrian-related structures at the site, however the appearance of these would be more akin to buildings that would be expected at a countryside location. Moreover, they would be less substantial in their extent than the scheme that is before me. As such, the existence of permission for these structures does not allay my concern in respect of the impact of the current appeal proposals.

6. Thus, I find that the proposals would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with policies EM1 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (adopted 2016), insofar as they seek to ensure development is sympathetic to the character and visual quality of an area, as well as that development respects the local environment. The scheme would also be contrary to the design aims of the Framework, as well as those of the Basingstoke and Deane – Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (2018).

Planning Balance

7. It is common ground between the parties that the Council is currently not able to demonstrate a five-years supply of deliverable housing sites. The Council confirms that at the current time, when applying a 5% buffer, it has a 4.44-year supply. As such, the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as envisaged by paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged.
8. The scheme would contribute only a single dwelling to the supply of housing in the district. The economic and social benefits associated with the construction and occupation of a single dwelling would not be substantial. Thus, I find that these matters carry little weight in favour of the proposal. The appellant also highlights that occupiers of the dwelling would be able to provide welfare benefits for horses that would be kept on the site. Given the scale of the equestrian element at the site, this matter also carries little weight.
9. There is no concern that the proposal would result in the construction of an isolated dwelling, as described at paragraph 80 of the Framework. However, the lack of harm in this respect is a neutral factor and not one that weighs in favour of the proposal.
10. Having given careful consideration to the balance of factors, I find that the substantial harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the limited benefits that would accrue. Thus, the appeal scheme does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Conclusion

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

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR