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# Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 August 2021

**by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 07 September 2021**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/21/3274049**

**Wheaton Hill Stables, Silver Street, Stevington, Bedford**

- 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 Ms A Bisswell against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 20/01902/MAF, dated 26 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 8 April 2021.
  - The development proposed is described as “change of use of land and buildings for a temporary period of 3 years to form commercial stables/livery, construction of new stables and siting of temporary home for a period of 3 years”.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Preliminary Matters

2. The Council’s refusal of planning permission only related to the residential aspect of the proposal, with no objection to the commercial stables and livery. I see no reason to disagree with this assessment.
3. The static caravan was already installed at the site at the time of my site visit. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan was subject to a referendum on 6 May 2021 and subsequently made on 9 June. The main parties were invited to comment on the made plan.
5. The Government released a revised National Planning Policy Framework in July 2021. The main parties were invited to comment on the revised document.
6. The postcode given on the application form was incorrect. I have therefore omitted it from the site address above, as the location of the site is sufficiently clear without it.

## Main Issues

7. The main issues are:
  - Whether the proposed development would be in an appropriate location, having regard to the aims and objectives of local and national planning policies; and,
  - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

## **Reasons**

### *Location*

8. Policy 68 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (the LP) sets out criteria against which proposals for accommodation for rural workers will be assessed. These include requiring that the dwelling is necessary to sustain the functioning of an established economically viable rural enterprise, and that evidence is provided to demonstrate that no satisfactory alternative means of providing accommodation has been identified. Policies 3S, 4S and 7S of the LP collectively direct new residential development mainly towards existing settlements while safeguarding the intrinsic character of the countryside.
9. A residential caravan on site would provide the business with a permanent presence to provide security and attend to the welfare of the horses. This would allow immediate attention to any issues arising and would be an additional selling point for the business. However, while the site is outside of the settlement of Stevington it is a relatively short distance from it. No evidence has been provided to show that the security and welfare considerations could not be met via remote monitoring from nearby accommodation, nor that the availability of appropriate and accessible accommodation has been investigated by the appellant.
10. An ongoing residential presence would eliminate any need for repeated travel between off-site accommodation and the site. However, even taken together with the other identified benefits of the on-site caravan, this would not outweigh the absence of proven need for a permanent presence on site, or the lack of evidence regarding alternative accommodation.
11. The proposed development is not therefore in an appropriate location, having regard to the aims and objectives of Policies 3S, 4S, 7S and 68 of the LP, which are set out above.

### *Character and appearance*

12. The static caravan is located behind the existing barn, as viewed from the road. It is a relatively small feature of a large site, and as it is next to the barn it is seen in the context of that much larger building and the other buildings in the wider stable yard.
13. While the static caravan is not an attractive feature in this rural location, permission is sought only for a temporary period. Policy 68 of the LP states that for proposals for accommodation at new rural enterprises the dwelling should for the first three years take the form of a caravan or other type of temporary accommodation on the site.
14. While a proliferation of domestic paraphernalia could be harmful to the rural character of the site, an appropriately worded condition could be used to define the extent of residential curtilage around the caravan if I were minded to allow the appeal. Given that the wider site would be in use as a working livery stables, and the caravan is sited in a relatively well-screened area of the site, this would ensure that there would be no unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the area. Any future proposal for permanent residential accommodation at the site would fall to be addressed at that time, if such an application were made.

15. The development would not therefore result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would consequently accord with Policies 7S, 28S, 29, 30 and 37 of the LP, which collectively seek to ensure that developments have a positive relationship with the surrounding area, integrating well with and complementing the character of the area in which the development is located.

*Planning Balance*

16. The development would result in the creation of one new dwelling, supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. However, this would only be a temporary benefit as permission is only sought for three years. Even when taken with the benefits to the appellant's business identified above, this would not outweigh the harm by reason of the site being in an inappropriate location.

**Conclusion**

17. For the reasons set out above, the appeal fails.

*M Chalk*

INSPECTOR