



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 July 2021

By Victor Callister BA(Hons) PGC(Oxon) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/J2210/W/20/3265612

**Land adjacent to Gorseley Cottage, Pett Bottom Road, Canterbury, Kent
CT4 6EH**

- 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 Honey Hill Developments against the decision of Canterbury City Council.
 - The application Ref CA/20/01745, dated 12 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of three, single storey holiday lets with associated bike, log and refuse storage, landscaping, new access and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the proposal is sustainable development in the countryside and the effect on its character and appearance, including that of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB) and the North Downs Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV).

Procedural Matters

3. Since Canterbury City Council's (the Council) refusal of the application Ref CA/20/01745 the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework. In line with Planning Practice Guidance, my consideration of the issues of this appeal has, therefore, been on the basis of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (the Framework) and the Canterbury District Local Plan (2017) (the Local Plan). Neither the appellant nor the Council have indicated that this is prejudicial to their cases.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a small rectangular field, backed by woods and located in open countryside outside the boundary of any defined settlement, which sits between detached dwellings at Gorseley Cottage and Little Gorseley. The appeal site and is currently accessed by a gate on Pett Bottom Road, a country road that at this point winds through the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the area designated as the North Downs Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV).

5. The proposal is for the construction of a large single storey building that would comprise 3 self contained holiday lets, which would be positioned at the centre of the appeal site fronting the road, on the other side of which is a large open field.
6. Each holiday let would have 2 bedrooms and an open plan living/dining/kitchen area. There would also be separate utility room accessed from the rear of the property and a single storey outbuilding to the rear providing storage and cycle parking for all lets.
7. The holiday lets would be accessed by vehicles and pedestrians from a new entrance on to Pett Bottom Road, with parking provision for 6 vehicles to the front of the proposed building.
8. The appellant has stated that the proposed building has been designed to appear to be in the form of a large agricultural outbuilding. Although in its size and materials it does have aspects of such buildings, it also has the appearance of purpose-built holiday chalets or small terraced bungalows, reinforced by the domestic detailing of the proposed building, car parking layout and landscaping with lawns.
9. The proposal would therefore result in the appearance of an isolated residential development in the countryside, taking the form of three dwellings in a short terrace, albeit restricted for use as holiday let accommodation.
10. The isolation of the proposal in the countryside would also result in the development being distant from local services and facilities, which, apart from very local facilities such as the nearby public house, would generally be accessed via private car, accommodated by the 6 proposed parking spaces, albeit accompanied by charging facilities for electric vehicles and cycles.
11. Due to its scale, the proposal would also result in a loss of the open character of this countryside location. Notwithstanding the presence of some electrical overhead power cables on the site, I consider that the field that forms the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the scenic beauty of the AONB and the value of the AHLV. The proposal would, however, infill much of the existing field, which currently separates two distinctly dispersed dwellings in the countryside. This would result in an urbanising effect out of keeping with the open rural character and appearance of the of the appeal site and the wider area, including that of the AONB and the AHLV.
12. In seeking to replicate the appearance of a large rural/agricultural outbuilding, the proposal does incorporate some features that reflect the character of agricultural buildings in the nearby area. However, given the location of the proposal in relation to a field in the open countryside and that it would be prominent in views in the wider area, I find that, due to its scale and otherwise residential terrace appearance, the proposal would introduce an urbanising feature, incongruous within its countryside setting. This would be harmful to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and the landscape value of the AHLV.
13. For these reasons the proposal conflicts with Policies SP1, SP4, LB1, LB2, TV8 and DBE3 of the Local Plan and Paragraphs 11, 80, 84, 174 and 176 of the Framework, which collectively seek development of high quality design, avoiding isolated residential development in the countryside, ensuring that

rural tourism and leisure developments respect the character of the countryside, recognise its intrinsic beauty, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; thereby promoting sustainable development.

Other Matters

14. The appellant has made a clear case for the contribution that the proposal would make to the to the local rural economy, not only through the letting of the proposed accommodation, but also to the wider local economy through the use of other local services and facilities. However, I find that the public benefit accruing would be limited and would not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
15. The appellant has drawn my attention to an allowed appeal¹ for new build holiday accommodation located within 3 Kilometres of the appeal site, for which the appellant has provided limited information. This allowed appeal would have been determined on the individual merits of the proposal, and I have likewise done the same, which is a fundamental principle that underpins the planning process.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, the proposed development would not accord with the local plan or the Framework, accordingly, the appeal should not succeed.

Victor Callister

INSPECTOR

¹ Appeal ref: APP/J2210/W/18/3216587