



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 3 November 2021

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 NOVEMBER 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/21/3267293

1 West Wantley Cottages, Fryern Road, Storrington RH20 4BJ

- 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 Becca Doe against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/20/2245 , dated 16 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is conversion of barn to a dwelling following demolition of existing outbuildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the course of this appeal Natural England issued advice that it cannot be concluded that existing groundwater abstraction in this area is not having an impact on the Arun Valley Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site. I have sought the main parties' views on this matter and I will return to it later in my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for housing.

Reasons

4. Together Policies 2 and 3 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (November 2015) (HDPF) seek to focus development within towns and villages with a defined built-up area, in accordance with the identified settlement hierarchy. Development outside built-up area boundaries also falls to be considered under Policy 4 which sets criteria as to where the expansion of settlements would be supported and Policy 26 which sets specific points that must be met for development to be appropriate in the countryside. This is, in part, in order to provide suitable access to services for new development.
5. The appeal site is located 300m outside the built up area of Storrington and is therefore in the countryside for the purposes of the development plan. The site is not allocated in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, it is not considered to be the expansion of a settlement. Nor is there justification that this open market dwelling is essential to this countryside location.
6. Furthermore, access to Storrington is via a route which, in the vicinity of the site, has no lighting or pavement. This would not be conducive to walking, particularly for those with young children and/or mobility issues. Nor am I

directed to public transport which is easily accessible from the site. Consequently, the site is poorly related to day to day services and facilities, and residents are likely to rely almost entirely on the private car.

7. It is not in dispute that the appeal site is not isolated. As such the provisions of paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 (the Framework) do not apply.
8. Consequently, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the settlement pattern in the Borough and would not provide suitable access to day to day services. Therefore, it is contrary to Policies 2, 3, 4 and 26 of the HDPF in this respect, the aims of which are set out above.

Other Matters

Character and Appearance

9. The houses at 1 and 2 West Wantley Cottages have clearly defined gardens and are visibly separate to the land associated with the appeal site. Beyond these houses, the land within the red line boundary includes land and buildings which appear to be used for storage and keeping animals. These buildings are appropriate to this typically rural use. The surrounding land is mainly open fields and the character of the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the surrounding countryside landscape.
10. There is no dispute in relation to the acceptability of the proposed appearance of the building. However, the proposed development would introduce domestic use including the associated comings and goings, car parking, and likely more formal gardens. This would change this land to a residential, more urban quality, which would be at odds with its countryside character. The proposed development includes the removal of four buildings on the site. This would make the site more open. However, given these buildings are appropriate in this rural area, their removal is only a minor benefit of the proposals.
11. Taking into account this limited harm alongside the minor improvement to the site's openness, overall, the effect on the character and appearance of the area would be neutral. Nevertheless, it would not result in an enhancement of the site.

Housing

12. The proposed development would provide the social and economic benefits associated with the provision of a single new dwelling. It would also represent a windfall unit which would contribute to the target to such provision set out in Policy 15 of the HDPF. However, taking into account that the development provides only one dwelling, the benefits in this regard are small.
13. Policy 10 of the HDPF mainly relates to Rural Economic Development and states that proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to business or commercial use will be considered favourably over residential in the first instance. I have no evidence before me that this site has been considered for a business or commercial use. Therefore, there is some conflict with this policy.

Previously Developed Land (PDL)

14. The reuse of PDL is supported by Policy 2 of the HDPF. The land is used in association with the keeping of horses and other animals, based on the

evidence before me it appears that the site is mainly in equestrian use. Therefore, the site is PDL. As such the proposed development is in accordance with Policy 2 in this respect.

Other Decision

15. My attention has been drawn to an appeal decision at Copped Hall Farm¹. In that case the benefits of the scheme include both the provision of housing and enhancement to the appearance of the area. As I have not identified any enhancement to the character and appearance of the area in this case, this decision is not directly comparable with the scheme before me. It therefore does not alter my assessment of the appeal proposal which I have determined on its individual planning merits.

Planning Balance

16. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, and I am presented with a recent decision² which finds a 4.2 year supply of deliverable sites. Therefore, paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged.
17. The provision of a single house on this windfall site would support the Government's target to significantly increase the supply of homes. It would also make use of previously developed land which is supported by the Framework. However, given the scale of the development, these benefits are limited.
18. On the other hand, I have identified environmental harm with regard to the site's limited access to services by reason of its location. This would be contrary to the aims of the Framework that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and encourage the use of sustainable transport modes.
19. Consequently, taking into account that the benefits would be minimal, in this case the adverse impacts identified would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Therefore, the appeal scheme would be contrary to the aims of the Framework and Policy 1 of the HDPF, and the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Arun Valley SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site

20. The Arun Valley SPA, SAC and Ramsar site is a habitats site that has a high level of protection. Natural England have advised that for development to show that it will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect from groundwater abstraction it would have to demonstrate water neutrality. The appellant is confident that the proposed dwelling will result in a reduction in the water usage at this location and has submitted a Design Stage Water Neutrality Report.
21. Nevertheless, there is no need to consider the implications of the proposal on the protected site because the scheme is unacceptable for other reasons.

¹ APP/Z3825/W/20/3246693

² APP/Z3825/W/20/3257700

Conclusion

22. 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 set out above, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR