



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 February 2022

by L Douglas BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A2280/W/21/3275295

Meresborough Road, Rainham, Kent

Grid Ref Easting: 582287, Grid Ref Northing: 164847

- 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 David Ambrose against the decision of Medway Council.
 - The application Ref MC/20/3068, dated 30 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is 'new stable block'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a new stable block at Meresborough Road, Rainham, Kent, Grid Ref Easting: 582287, Grid Ref Northing: 164847 in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref MC/20/3068, dated 30 November 2020, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan 1, Drawing 2: General Location Plan, Drawing 3: Proposed Elevations, Floor Plans and Roof Plans, and Drawing 4.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address provided on the application form, including the grid references for the appeal site, are different to those provided in the appeal form. The appeal form address and grid references provide a more accurate description of the location of the appeal site and I have therefore referred to those in the banner heading above.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with specific regard to an Area of Local Landscape Importance (ALLI).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is comprised of paddocks in the open countryside, located on a rural lane. I saw much of the immediate surrounding area to be in use for equestrian activities, with a number of paddocks, stables, field shelters and associated infrastructure clearly seen in all directions, alongside orchards and

intersected by footpaths. I saw buildings which appeared to be currently or formerly in use as stables short distances to the northeast and southwest of the appeal site and also in longer views on the opposite side of Meresborough Road.

5. The character and appearance of the appeal site and its near surroundings is therefore rural and heavily influenced by equestrian activities, rather than the orchards, arable farmland and agricultural grazing referred to in the Council's submissions. The undulating agricultural landscape referred to by the Medway Landscape Character Assessment (MLCA) may form part of the wider ALLI and the eastern backdrop to the appeal site, but I saw this particular part of Meresborough Road to be different to those distant views.
6. It is proposed to erect a single storey building comprising four stables, a tack room and two hay barns. The proposed building would be of a simple, single storey low-pitched roof design and would therefore appear as a functional building typical for this location. It would be appropriately positioned close to the northwestern boundary with Meresborough Road and would be clad in timber, sympathetic to its rural surroundings.
7. The size of the proposed building would be proportionate to that of the paddocks forming the appeal site. The proposal would be seen in restricted views from the highway due to the thick boundary planting along the northwestern boundary. There would be wide views of the proposal from the footpath and open countryside to the east and south, but it would be seen as an equestrian building set within paddocks in the context of similar buildings on neighbouring sites. It would not, therefore, appear as a prominent feature in the street scene or diverge from the prevailing character of the area.
8. The MLCA identifies the introduction of equine related activities as one of the detracting features of the ALLI and provides guidelines seeking to discourage such land uses; however, in this particular location equestrian buildings and activities are the dominant landscape features. The proposal would intensify equestrian activities at the appeal site, but it would not substantially change the character or appearance of the ALLI along this part of Meresborough Road.
9. The proposed development would therefore maintain the character and appearance of the area and would be sympathetic to the landscape and function of this part of the ALLI, in accordance with Policies BNE1, BNE34 and BNE51 of the Medway Local Plan (2003). These require, amongst other things, the design of development to be appropriate to the character, appearance and functioning of its surroundings without harming the landscape character and function of ALLIs, and equestrian developments to maintain the character of the locality and blend with surroundings. This reflects the advice set out at Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), which encourages development to be sympathetic to local character, including landscape setting.

Conditions

10. Conditions requiring the commencement of development within the relevant timeframe and the carrying out of development in accordance with the approved plans are necessary in the interests of clarity.

Conclusion

11. There are no material considerations that indicate the application should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

L Douglas

INSPECTOR