



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2022

by H Jones BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28TH November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E2734/W/22/3304728

Beckwith Cottage Farm, Beckwith Head To Beckwith Cottage, Beckwith, North Yorkshire HG3 1QQ

- 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 J Olnier against the decision of Harrogate Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00406/FUL, dated 1 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 1 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is siting of 2 no holiday accommodation pods.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether or not, having regard to the development plan and national planning policy, the appeal site is an appropriate location for development of the nature proposed; and
 - The effects of the development upon the character and appearance of the area and the local landscape.

Reasons

Location of the development proposed

3. Beckwith Cottage Farm is a farm located in open countryside to the south-west of Harrogate. Though located close to other clusters of buildings, the farm is not within a settlement. Access is provided via a lane with no through route for vehicles and no pavements to its side.
4. The clusters of buildings closest to the site comprise principally of residential properties, holiday accommodation, agricultural buildings and equine development. There is a public footpath which crosses the farm, and this provides a short-cut, across fields, to a pub off a neighbouring road. Aside from this, however, services and facilities are not close-by to the site.
5. Any occupiers of the proposed holiday pods would be required to travel to the built-up parts of Harrogate in order to gain access to a reasonable array of services and facilities. On the basis of the evidence before me, and my own visit, no bus services would appear to operate close-by to the site. Owing to a combination of the distances involved and no pavements serving some roads

on the route, walking to facilities and bus stops would not be an attractive proposition for most people.

6. I accept that there would be advantages to the existing farm enterprise brought about by the proposal which would provide diversification and in turn help reduce risk to the business from changing consumer patterns. The development would benefit from some access to public footpath routes, attractive views and would provide bespoke accommodation. This would likely assist in the popularity and success of the accommodation.
7. However, the evidence before me does not show that the tourism proposal requires a rural location and cannot be accommodated elsewhere. This is a requirement of Policy EC7 of the Harrogate District Local Plan, 2020 (LP). The accommodation may be desirable and have the potential to support the existing farming enterprise, but this does not mean that the accommodation is necessary at this particular site nor overcome the inadequate access to services which the site has. Being accessible to services is a further requirement of Policy EC7.
8. Whilst Policy EC4 requires a comprehensive farm diversification scheme, Policy EC7, which specifically relates to rural tourism, does not, albeit it references that one would assist in demonstrating the acceptability of the scheme. Therefore, whilst I do not find that the submitted diversification schemes are comprehensive, particularly in respect of articulating the need and impacts of the proposal, this is not, alone, a determinative factor given Policy EC7 can be complied with without one.
9. Policy GS5 of the LP and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) each seek to support a prosperous rural economy. The Framework acknowledges at paragraph 85 that sites to meet local business and community needs may have to be found beyond settlements and in locations not well served by public transport. However, for the above reasons, I have no substantive evidence that accommodation at this site is necessary to meet any particular tourism need, nor that it is essential to the future of the current farming enterprise.
10. However, and for the reasons given I nevertheless find that the site would not be an appropriate location for the rural tourism proposal and would be contrary to Policies EC4, EC7 and GS3 of the LP as a result. Moreover, the development would not constitute a sustainable rural tourism development and would therefore be contrary to advice at paragraph 84 of the Framework.
11. Separately, the development would not conflict with Policy GS5 of the LP. Though of some relevance to the rural economy and farm diversification, the development would not be in conflict with any of the criteria therein.

Effects upon the character and appearance of the area and the landscape

12. The existing built development at Beckwith Cottage Farm is located close to the lane from which it is accessed. The buildings are tightly arranged around a yard space with the cottage itself to one side of this yard. The clusters of buildings at the nearest neighbouring farms and properties are similarly situated close to the lane and are tightly arranged.
13. In contrast, the proposed accommodation pods would be located a significant distance from any existing group of buildings and would thereby form an

isolated incursion into the countryside. I note that the landscape character assessment of the Upper Crimple Valley special landscape area highlights that the area already contains a large amount of scattered settlement and has limited capacity to accept additional development without adverse effects. The proposed siting of the accommodation pods, so divorced from other buildings, would represent a visually isolated form of development that the local landscape is sensitive to. Albeit the pods would be relatively secluded, there would be vantage points where these effects would be publicly visible, and this would include from the public footpath. I accept that the design includes elements that may moderate its effects to an extent. This includes the timber finish and the absence of any dedicated parking spaces next to the pods. However, these design elements do not overcome the harm caused by the isolated siting of the pods.

14. Consequently, I find that the development would be unsympathetic to the landscape character and built form in the area and would in turn fail to protect the character and appearance of the landscape contrary to Policies NE4 and HP3 of the LP.

Other Matters

15. I have no substantive evidence that the development would result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land nor would the amount of agricultural land which would be lost to the development be significant. Accordingly, I find no conflict with Policy NE8 of the LP which seeks to protect best and most versatile agriculture land with specific demonstrations required on sites in excess of 5ha.
16. Public concerns with the proposals may have been limited, however, the absence of significant public objections does not in itself render the scheme appropriate nor overcome my concerns.
17. The development may not cause a highway safety risk or detrimentally affect air quality, however, this lack of harm is neutral in the planning balance and does not outweigh the harm I have identified in respect of the main issues.

Conclusion and planning balance

18. As set out above, the development would not be in an appropriate location and would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to the development plan in these respects. Whilst the proposal would incorporate photovoltaics and sustainably sourced timber, would support the visitor economy, and may assist in farm diversification, that does not alter my view that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Jones

INSPECTOR