



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 June 2023

by J Hobbs MRTPI MCD BSc (hons)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/W/22/3300355

Little Worge Farm, Brightling, Robertsbridge TN32 5HN

- 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 Brightling Properties against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application Ref RR/2021/2509/P, dated 7 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of part of agricultural barn and erection of a holiday cottage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue of this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and AONBs.
4. The proposal includes the part demolition of a very large barn and construction of holiday accommodation which would be similar in appearance to the existing accommodation at Little Worge Farm. The existing barn is located at the edge of the farmyard. Given the surrounding topography and siting, the barn is prominent in wider views particularly to the south and west. The wooded area next to the barn, and the barn itself, largely screen the existing holiday accommodation from wider views. The barn is similar in design to others which are present in the AONB, and an agricultural use would be expected in this location. As such, the existing development conserves the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
5. The proposed development would lead to the removal of a large section of this barn and the siting of a moderately sized, two bedroom holiday cottage. The proposed holiday cottage would occupy a smaller footprint than the section of the barn that would be removed. Despite the proposed accommodation being smaller than the barn, it would have a greater visual impact given the

extension of residential development further south than the existing accommodation.

6. The appellant contends that the proposed development would relate to the existing group of buildings but also acknowledges these buildings were historically associated with farming. Although it would relate to other holiday homes, it would lead to further residential development on the edge of the group of buildings. Whilst the proposed development would have a similar appearance to the other holiday cottages, as above, they are largely screened from wider views and therefore they have less of an effect on the AONB.
7. The proposed development would be occupied as holiday accommodation and therefore it may require fewer items of garden paraphernalia than a dwelling that is permanently occupied. Nevertheless, it would still include some items, which could include an external seating area, a barbeque or play equipment. The presence of any garden paraphernalia would further increase the extent of the harm caused to the AONB through its urbanising effect.
8. The proposed activity would not be different to the existing holiday cottages and the increase in activity would only be modest given the scale of development. There would be a modest increase in car parking, but this could displace some vehicular movements to the barn. As such, no additional harm is created by the activity generated by the proposed development.
9. Despite being set away from the boundary, the appeal proposal would lead to a holiday cottage being sited in a prominent location within wider views which would neither conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
10. Planning permission ref. RR/2021/2902/P for a holiday let at Knockbridge Farm has been put before me as evidence of a similar development that has been allowed by the Council. Nevertheless, based on the plans of that scheme before me, that proposed holiday let would be screened by other development including stabling and a barn, which are uses more commonly found in the AONB and would preserve its landscape and scenic beauty. That proposal is therefore materially different to the appeal scheme and does not alter my conclusion on the acceptability of this scheme.
11. The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and the High Weald AONB. It would be contrary to policies OSS4, RA2, RA3, EC6, and EN1 of the Rother Local Plan, Core Strategy, September 2014, and policies DEC2, DEN1 and DEN2 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan, December 2019.
12. These policies indicate that all development should respect and not detract from the character and appearance of its locality; the overarching strategy for the countryside includes supporting tourism facilities which are of a scale and location in keeping with the rural character of the countryside; proposals for development in the countryside will be determined on the basis of supporting suitable tourism opportunities; proposals relating to tourism facilities will be encouraged where they are compatible with other Core Strategy policies; management of the high quality natural landscape character is to be achieved by ensuring the protection of the ecological features and settlement pattern of the AONB; all policies for holiday accommodation must safeguard the intrinsic and distinctive landscape character; the siting, layout and design of

development should maintain and reinforce the natural landscape character; and, all development within the AONB shall conserve or enhance its landscape and scenic beauty.

13. The appeal scheme is also contrary to paragraph 176 of the Framework which requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs.

Other Matters

14. The proposed development would not have an effect on the living conditions of neighbouring residents; however this is a neutral factor, and therefore does not weigh in favour or against the appeal proposal.
15. There would be economic benefits associated with the provision of tourist accommodation in the rural area, but they would be limited given the modest scale of development. As such, they do not alter my assessment of the acceptability of the appeal scheme.

Conclusion

16. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.
17. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Hobbs

INSPECTOR