



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2024

by H Miles BA (hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/23/3327158

Swallow Cottage Rye Common, Odiham, Hook, Hampshire RG29 1HU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Black against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/02473/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of stable block and siting of horsewalker with associated access drive and hardstanding (retrospective).
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development is taken from the decision notice and appeal form as this accurately and succinctly describes the development for which permission is sought.
3. The fact that development has been carried out is not in dispute. For the avoidance of doubt, this has not altered my decision. Planning permission was granted in December 2023¹ for the erection of a 4-bedroom dwelling following demolition of existing 2-bedroom dwelling and adjacent stables (in the southeast corner of the application site), internal access road and formation of a new access from the highway, with amendments permitted in April 2024². The Council have stated that works on site in connection with the replacement dwelling had started.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of this countryside area.

Reasons

5. The stable block has been erected in a parcel of land which is an open field. It is enclosed by woodland to the north and east, with a line of trees and planting on the other sides. It is accessed via a driveway in stone chippings and edging blocks which leads to the A287. The site is mainly surrounded by open countryside land. The open green nature of the appeal site makes a positive contribution to these pleasant countryside surroundings.

¹ LPA ref: 23/01362/FUL

² LPA ref 24/00229/AMCON

6. The appeal site is associated with Swallow Cottage. The dwelling is in the southeastern corner of the site and is located close to Varndell House. These properties and their domestic features appear as a limited parcel of residential development within a wider open countryside setting. Although the fields to the west of the access road are in the same ownership as the house, their open green character means they are more closely associated with the surrounding countryside land.
7. The building includes four stables/stores in timber with a pitched roof. There is a central portion at a greater height with a contrasting gable end style roof and design features including a clock. This part is for tractors to pass and horses to be tacked up, mounted, washed down and groomed. The development includes a large area of paved hardstanding, part of which is used for vehicles including horseboxes to park and manoeuvre. The stables are located approximately 150m northwest of Swallow House and its domestic gardens.
8. The appeal scheme introduces a large area of built development into open countryside. Although the timber materials are not harmful, the appearance and height of the central portion of the stables do not result in a modest appearance to the development. Furthermore, the extent of the hardstanding increases the prominence and scale of this developed site. As such the development of these stables results in a harmfully dominant built form which unacceptably erodes the open countryside nature of the site and its surroundings. Consequently, it is significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
9. The stables are not readily visible in public views although they are likely to be seen from land associated with Varndell House and as such this harm would be experienced.
10. Saved policy RUR34 of Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 and First Alterations to the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement 1996-2006 (LP) requires that for horse related development, amongst other things, adequate provision should be made for off road exercising of horses. There is dispute between the parties as to the use of the field adjacent to the stable block. As an Inspector dealing solely with an application for planning permission, it is not my role to determine whether a use or operation is lawful. A Horsecowalker is also included in the appeal scheme. Saved policy RUR34 of the LP also requires that new buildings for horse related development are essential to the open countryside. The development would replace stables that are proposed to be removed in association with the redevelopment of the dwelling. Nevertheless, saved policy RUR34 of the LP also requires that development must not be significantly harmful to the open character of the countryside. Therefore, even if the field were in equestrian use and the buildings were essential, the development is contrary to this policy in any case.
11. Whilst the development provides a recreational use for the occupiers' social and recreational needs and promotes healthy lifestyles, this is mainly a private benefit and does not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to the development plan, as set out above.
12. Therefore, the development is harmful to the character and appearance of this countryside area. As such it is contrary to saved policies RUR 34 and GEN 1 which, in addition to the aims outlined above, require that development should

conserve or enhance the district's landscape, as well as requiring that development is in keeping with the local character.

Conclusion

13. The appeal scheme does not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR