
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2015

by **John Chase MCD DipArch RIBA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 July 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/15/3005505

Land at Grey Abbey Bridge, North Perrott, Crewkerne, Somerset

- 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 John Hunter against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 14/03600/FUL, dated 6 August 2014, was refused by notice dated 1 October 2014.
 - The development proposed is the change of use of land to equestrian and the erection of stables.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the development shown above is that taken from the Council's decision notice and appeal form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is an irregularly shaped field of about .84 ha set between two roads, the A3066 and School Hill, within open countryside. The field appears presently unused, with unkempt grass. It is proposed to use the land for keeping horses, with a new stable block alongside the existing hedgerow which separates the field from School Hill. Whilst the application drawings show the land divided by new fences, and the insertion of a parking area, the appellant agrees to a condition removing these features if, by its imposition, the scheme would be rendered acceptable.
5. Policy EQ8 of the recently adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) concerns equine development and requires, amongst other matters, that any new stables or field shelters should be closely related to existing settlements or groups of buildings. Whilst the appellant's views to the contrary are noted, it cannot be construed that the proposed stables would meet this criterion. The nearest existing buildings, at Grey Abbey Farm, are some way distant from the site, separated by a road, and the settlement of North Perrott is further

removed to the north. The building would be isolated in the countryside, rather than being closely related to any existing development. Policy EQ8 also requires that equine development should not harm any national or international wildlife or landscape designations, but there is no indication that the land, or any adjoining, has any special status in these respects.

6. The proposal is clearly contrary to an aspect of the Policy EQ8 and the question arises as to whether there are material considerations which outweigh the application of this policy. It is the appellant's view that the impact would be sufficiently muted to minimise any harm to the quality of the landscape. Attention is drawn to the location of the stables backing onto the hedge so that, at least for part of the year, the building would be screened from School Hill. It is also suggested that conditions may be applied to prevent the more intrusive aspects of the scheme identified by the Council, including restrictions on the use of jumps and external lighting, as well as the elimination of parking and permanent fencing, referred to above.
7. These points are noted, and it is certainly the case that the vegetation along the School Hill frontage is dense, and that the stable would not be especially noticeable from this side. However, the site is more visible from the A3066 and, because of its elevated position in relation to this road, the stables and use of the land for horse keeping would become apparent. Even if permanent fencing and jumps were to be eliminated, and additional landscaping introduced, the equestrian activity would have a different character from the predominantly agricultural nature of the surroundings. Amongst other matters, temporary fencing, vehicle parking (whether on site or in the field entrance), and the more intensive use of the land would be at odds with the sparsely developed and traditional nature of the rural area.
8. The development would be harmful to the prevailing character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to Local Plan Policy EQ2 which seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape, reinforcing its distinctive character, and to policy EQ8, as described above. No material considerations indicate that this appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.

John Chase

INSPECTOR