



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 June 2009

by **D R Cullingford BA MPhil MRTPI**

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

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Decision date:
7 July 2009

Appeal Ref: APP/N1350/A/09/2099680

Land at Brickyard Farm, Neasham Road, Hurworth Moor, Darlington

- 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 by Mr T Smith against the decision of the Darlington Borough Council.
- The application (ref: 08/00671/FUL and dated 1 August 2008) was refused by notice dated 6 October 2008.
- The development is described as the 'erection of stable comprising of 3 No. stables, tack room and feed store at proposed block'.

Decision

1. For the reasons given below, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I dismiss the appeal.

Reasons

2. The appeal site is a small unkempt rectangle of poor grassland partly hidden by roadside hedges at the corner of Neasham Road and Burma Road. It lies in the countryside beyond the outskirts of Darlington and towards Hurworth Moor. The southern part of it is opposite the sheds and yard of a car breaker's: roughly 250m further south is the extensive muddle and mess at Brickyard Farm. The proposal involves the erection of a stable block, including a tack room and feed store, that would result in a building about 19m long, 4m wide and 3.5m high positioned towards the southern boundary of the site. Access is proposed from the north (Burma Road), re-positioned to be close to a stream in the north eastern corner of the site, thereby overcoming initial concerns relating to visibility and proximity to a road junction. It remains to consider whether this scheme would constitute sporadic development damaging to the character and appearance of the countryside, as the Council claim. They refer to several 'saved' policies set out in the Local Plan, of which I think the most relevant is policy R15, which is supportive of 'horse related' development provided it would not detract from the character and appearance of the locality. That is the issue on which this appeal turns.
3. I accept that the site currently contributes little to the landscape due to its partial covering with grey gravel, previous connection with a clay pit and dishevelled appearance. It does, however, lie behind quite pleasant hedges and it contributes to the perception of open land and countryside around the cacophony of uses in the vicinity. The erection of the fairly substantial stable block proposed would detract from that contribution. In spite of the hedges, the building would be evident from the adjacent roads. It would appear as an oddly isolated structure in the midst of open fields unrelated to the scrapyard

opposite and some 250m from Brickyard Farm. Hence, I do not agree that it would be well related to existing development. On the contrary, I think that it would add to the sporadic structures evident here, thereby further impairing the character and appearance of the countryside. Moreover, it is difficult to see how the number of horses that could be stabled in the proposed building could be kept on such a modest area of land without the need for horse boxes and some provision for loading and unloading food and equipment, as well as storing and removing manure. In my view, some kind of track would eventually be necessary across the site from the access to the stable block. All the associated paraphernalia would add to the impact of the scheme.

4. In addition, I think that such harmful effects would be exacerbated by the creation of a new access towards the north eastern corner of the site. That is just where a section of the roadside hedge is particularly thick and where one or two trees contribute to the partial screening of the site. The access would require a swathe of 'roadway' to be cut through that foliage, thereby opening up a vista towards the proposed stable building and any associated paraphernalia and removing a pleasant feature that now contributes to the character and appearance of the landscape. Hence, although policy R15 is supportive of horse related development in the countryside, I consider that this scheme would contravene that policy because it would detract from the character and appearance of the locality.
5. I have considered all the other matters raised. However, I find nothing sufficiently compelling to alter my conclusion that this appeal should be dismissed.



INSPECTOR