
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2012

by **Graham Edward Snowdon BA BPhil Dip Mgmt MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 17 October 2012

Appeal Ref: APP/N1350/A/12/2178269

Field at OSGR E432786 N515576, Middleton St George, Darlington DL1 3JU

- 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 Derek Smith against the decision of Darlington Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 12/00243/FUL, dated 29 March 2012, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2012.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a stable block.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission granted for the erection of a stable block at Field at OSGR E432786 N515576, Middleton St George, Darlington DL1 3JU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 12/00243/FUL, dated 29 March 2012, subject to the following conditions:
 - (1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out fully in accordance with the following approved plan: Drawing no RKD/1381/11.

Preliminary Matter

2. Although the appeal form states that the appeal site is located within the Green Belt, the Council's Questionnaire confirms that this is not the case and I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies immediately east of the A66 in an area of undulating and open mixed pastoral and arable farming land, which rises gently towards the north-east. It is characterised by large fields delineated by post and rail fences, some softened by hedgerow planting or lines of trees. Extensive public
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views eastwards from the A66 are possible and the landscape is generally free of built structures. There are two utilitarian (moveable?) structures on the site, which appear to be used in conjunction with the care of horses, which could be seen grazing on the adjacent field. Equine related activities are not uncommon in this urban fringe area.

5. In its reason for refusal, the Council cites Policies E2, E4 and R15, saved from its Local Plan. The first of these seeks to limit development in the open countryside to, among other things, small scale development beneficial to the rural economy or the needs of rural communities. Policy E4 seeks to encourage new buildings in the countryside to be visually related to other buildings. Policy R15 specifically relates to horse-related development for both recreational and commercial purposes and is positively worded to enable such development provided that, among other things, it would not detract from the character and appearance of the locality. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to support recreation and enterprise in rural areas, whilst protecting landscape areas, commensurate with their status. As the local policies are broadly compliant with these aims, I give them due weight at this appeal, in line with the advice in paragraph 215 of the NPPF.
6. The proposed stables would not be related to any existing buildings and would be widely seen within a generally open landscape. However, they would be of a traditional design and appearance and of a type and scale, which can be widely found in rural areas on the urban fringe and satisfactorily absorbed into a rural setting. The countryside at this location is pleasant and open, but not of any particular landscape merit and I do not consider that the proposed stables would appear out-of-place or unduly harm the rural landscape, particularly as some screen hedge planting of a traditional nature is also proposed. Furthermore, I note that allowing the appeal would secure the removal of the existing, rather unsightly containers on the site, though, in the absence of any information regarding the planning status of these, I give only limited weight to this benefit.
7. Overall, on the main issue, I conclude that the proposal would not have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the countryside and would broadly conform to the requirements of Local Plan Policy, in particular Policies E2 and R15.
8. I consider that the external materials specified in the application are acceptable and that a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans (which is necessary for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of securing a satisfactory standard of development) would secure the implementation of the associated planting. Conditions specifically relating to materials and landscaping are, therefore, unnecessary.
9. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

G E Snowdon

INSPECTOR